A Quarterly of New Literature

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# ACCENT

A REPORT ON NAZI LITERATURE—

F. C. WEISKOPF: *Fear Under the Shiny Armor*

HARRY SLOCHOWER: *Hauptmann and Fallada*

R. P. BLACKMUR: The Idiot of *Dostoevsky*

RICHARD SULLIVAN: *The Women*

LEWIS FISHER: *Military Secret*

HORACE GREGORY: *An Examination of Wallace Stevens*

TWELVE YOUNG POETS:

John Waller
Martha Benson
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John Finch

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AUTUMN, 1942

# DYN

*The Americas' leading review of Modern Art*

Editor & Publisher: Wolfgang Paalen
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DYN No. 3 — Fall, 1942

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Apropos of Perennial Misunderstanding by Wolfgang Paalen

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## Autumn, 1942

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**HENRY JAMES NUMBER**

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RICHARD SULLIVAN'S just-published *Summer After Summer* is one of the most i portant first novels of the year. He teaches English at Notre Dame.

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ACCENT

A QUARTERLY OF NEW LITERATURE

Volume 3, Number 1 Autumn, 1942

# RICHARD SULLIVAN:

## *The Women*

Maybe night is the time when women come into their power. Men are strong in the bright sun, but darkness is for women. Barnaby thought of this afterward, when he was going to sleep. When he was putting Julie to bed, early, he first realized that he was the only man in the house; and he felt a sudden unexpected excitement even then in thinking about the three women, his daughter, his wife, and his mother: he thought of his relations to each of them, of how some way, with a kind of bewildering rightness, just by the fact of existing himself, he had made these three into a unity which had some sort of strange meaning, some significance so deep and involved that at last it merged into mystery.

He had been disappointed that his father wasn't home. His mother had run out onto the side porch when they drove in the driveway. "Hello!" she cried, "hello! *hello!* Oh, *honey!*" He had stopped the car by this time and Julie had scrambled out over all the bags and packages in the back seat, and now his mother was rocking her tall body sideways hugging Julie on the bottom porch step. "Oh, *honey!*" she cried. "How *are* you? My, how *big* you're getting!" She tried to get free of clinging Julie, who was squealing, "Gramma, Gramma, where's Shep? Is my Shep here? I want my doggie!" It was just dusk and he was struck with how joyous and familiar his mother looked in the sunless air, trying to get past their squealing little girl to them. "My, *my!*" she cried. "You look *good!*" She

hugged Nell, who was out of the car ahead of him. "How're you feeling Nell?" she asked anxiously. "You stand the drive all right? You didn't get any *bouncing,* did you——Oh, *Tommy!*" she cried, as he seized her and whirled her around in a full circle. "You let me *down!* What way is that to treat your own ma! Come on, come *on* in the house! Oh, I'm so *glad* to see you, I was beginning to get *worried.* Your letter didn't say what time, Tom. I didn't know what time you'd get here. I kind of figured for supper, but earlier than this, *earlier.* We're going to have chicken and it's all *brown* now, but you'll have to eat it anyhow. Come on, come *on!* We'll talk while we eat. I've got a girl in to help me."

The old collie Shep was prancing in slow circles, whining with Julie hanging on his neck, and Barnaby was unpacking bags from the car, and his mother was running on as she always did, her excitement spilling out in a chattering flow of words, and Nell was standing there waiting, looking tired, calling to Julie to be careful of the dog, "He hasn't seen you for a long time now. Don't tease him!" and in the dark trees you could hear the birds against all the open quiet, and out on the road the distant putter of a car. Then, "Dad isn't here," he heard his mother saying. "They wanted him out in the country, I don't know what it is out there, he tried to get the other agent to go, but his wife's expecting any minute, she's further along than you, Nell! and he had to go, there was no getting out of it but he felt so bad, said I should tell you how bad he felt and to give Julie a great big squeeze for him, and he'll be back by noon tomorrow sure, he said, whatever's wrong out there!"

He had expected his father to be here. During the hot afternoon driving through sun-haze on the flat cement, he had looked forward to sitting on the side porch at dusk with his father; they used to sit out there half an hour before supper, talking, watching the sun go down, drinking beer slowly out of bottles icy-wet from the old brown icebox in the back hall. But then this afternoon there had been three detours, and he knew they'd be lucky to get home before dark; and now they were here but his father was gone.

He was disappointed, but it wasn't until later that he had begun to think about his father's absence as somehow emphasizing the women's presence. During supper Julie, who was over-tired, fussed and whimpered and then right at the end of the meal upset the glass of milk she had refused to drink. He nervously slapped her fingers; he didn't mean to punish her for what was really an accident but all this talking and the knowledge that Nell was worn-out made him nervous. Nell got up. "I'll get her ready for bed," she said. "She's out on her feet."

He stood up too. "Tom," his mother said in a low voice, "I wonder Greta's out there in the kitchen. Dad always drives her home at night. They live on the Green Bay road, you don't know the family, I guess. Johnsons? No, they moved there since you went away."

"You want me to drive her over?" He glanced quickly at Nell; sometimes she liked him to help with Julie at night.

"Would you?" his mother said. It's over a mile, I don't like to have her walk. It's kind of late, I thought I'd tell her to stack the dishes, she can do them in the morning. I don't usually keep her this late."

He had met Greta when first they came in, his mother proudly introducing them all; she was a big girl in a washed-out billowing dress; he had heard her moving around out in the kitchen while they were eating.

When she came out to him waiting in the car he was disturbed. She had changed her dress; she was wearing a dark skirt now and a fresh white blouse with a sailor collar. As she stood on the porch outside nodding to what his mother inside the doorway was saying, he, in the car, saw her as for the first time: saw the flaring skirt, the good long legs, the big stateliness of the girl; then realized uneasily, almost with alarm, that she was not really a girl, that that was just his mother's word; she was not adolescent at all, but grown, mature. Turning his head he stared at the tiny darting insects whirling in the white brilliance of the car's headlights; over the low pulse of the motor he could hear the leaves moving in the night wind. You got to a certain age and you thought maybe now thank God the fever and sensitivity were gone, or at least focussed, you were old enough certainly, and then a strange woman is going to get in the car with you for a mile-ride home and it all starts again, with the crazy bugs in the headlights and the soft stir of the wind and the low steady motor. If she'd been a girl, a kid, it'd be nothing; he was old enough so young girls couldn't trouble him. But this woman—

He opened the car door for her. "Now you'll have to tell me the way, Greta. It's been a long time since I travelled the sideroads around here." In the light from the dashboard he noticed the blue stars on her white collar, the rounding blue braid encircling her bare firm arm at the sleeve edge. He moved far to his side of the front seat and lit a new cigarette from the butt of his old one. I'm a married man, he said to himself, what's the matter with me—

They drove through the darkness; the fields were sweet beside the road; they passed a low place where frogs croaked; it was a thick night, no stars, the air heavy and tremulous as before rain. Her voice was clear, polite, distant; she told him where to turn; it was only a little way; soon they were there. "Well, thank you very much, Mr. Barnaby." She had long brown lashes and her face was plain and pale. Twisting the door handle she leaned momentarily toward him; he caught the faint sharp fragrance of sachet, so feminine, so familiar; then with a little movement she was out of the car. "Goodnight, Greta!" He watched her running swiftly over the grass to the small lighted house.

Backing the car around he felt relieved, then exultant. It hadn't been anything. You worried and were nervous and then it was nothing. Attraction, that was all, the instant automatic tug; it didn't have to mean anything; you just ignored it. He had her placed in his mind now, as the trees by the roadside here were placed, known marks against the night landscape, always to be recognized; not strange any more, but known and

scrupulously to be admired, at a distance, though, at a distance. He let his arm hang out the car window, feeling the soft pressure of heavy darkness splitting and flowing around him. It was good to be home.

Nell called from upstairs as he came into the house, "Tom!" His mother was in the kitchen washing the dishes she had said she'd leave stacked for Greta in the morning. "Hi!" he called to her. "See you in a minute!" And he went up to Nell in the dark bedroom.

She was lying across the foot of their bed, her legs stretched out to Julie's cot: the smooth quicksilver flow of light on silk—"Daddy! Daddy!" cried Julie, bouncing on her pillow. "You have to tell me a story!" He bent over Nell; she did not move; in the light from the hall he could see the moist brown hair curling loosely at her temple—it always waved in the damp weather; he could not see her eyes looking up at him; but the shadows on her face changed when she spoke: "I'm so tired, Tom. I just couldn't tell her a story."

"You feel sick?"

"Tired."

"Sure? Anything wrong?—Be *quiet,* Julie!—The drive too much for you?"

"No."

He put one hand out toward her: her slim and delicate knees, he thought, this lovely line of bone and rounding flesh. But she quickly sat up. "No, don't. I've got to help your mother do dishes."

"You *don't* have to!" he told her angrily. "Go to bed if you're tired!"

"I want to help her." She stood up, brushed slowly, provocatively, past him in the narrow space between cot and big bed; then she stood in the doorway, watching him look at her, outlined in profile against the hall light, small, fragile, very trim in her coarse green linen but swelling in the faint and beautiful curve of early pregnancy; the light caught the clean straight line of her nose, her vivid lips; she turned slightly and it marked one breast and shoulder.

"Did you have a nice ride?" she asked mockingly.

Nodding he said: "It's getting ready to rain."

"Have a good talk with Greta?"

"She told me where to turn," he said. "I wish you'd go to bed."

He sat on the cot beside Julie, who was beating her heels savagely on the mattress. "Daddy!—Please!" He turned to her. "Shhhh!" When Nell spoke again he was surprised; he thought she had gone.

"Well, she was certainly excited about getting a ride from *you,*" Nell said. "The way she talked to your mother anyhow!" Slowly as he watched she shifted her weight from one hip to the other, and the pattern of light on her dress changed. She laughed lightly, intimately. "Are you glad to be home, Tom?"

"Yes, I'm glad."

"As glad as you thought you'd be?"

"I don't know," he said. "Yes, I guess so. Why?'

"I just wondered.' She laughed again with the same light intimate uggestion of being in on a secret. Laughing she went down the hall.

*"Daddy!"*

He looked out of the dark room into the empty bright doorway where Nell had stood.

"All right, honey. Once upon a time," he said vaguely, and stopped.

*"Dad-dy!"*

"Once upon a time there was a little girl named Esmerelda."

"Not that one! I-didn't-want-that-one!"

She was spiteful and tired. He looked down at her for the first time since Nell had gone. She lay angrily staring up at him, her arms coming out of the puffy sleeves of her nightgown in sturdy right angles, out and up, dark on the pillow, like a frame for her head. As he bent over her she grabbed his face with both her hands. "I-want-the-island!" she hissed at him. Under the bedcover she thrashed her legs furiously and squirmed. Head down, he smiled. The terrific femininity of the child! Her small fingers were digging into his cheeks; with complete and angry confidence she was demanding things of him, prepared to be sweet if he was obliging, ready to weep if he refused. My God, he thought, slipping his arm under her, someday she'll get married, some little squirt of a boy so high now will grow up and marry her; I suppose it's all right, there's nothing I can do. Hugging her, he rocked back and forth with her, remembering his mother hugging her on the bottom porch steps when they came, rocking with her. She was warm, talcum-fragrant, and tiny; she had Nell's fragility. Now she twisted in his arms. "All right, all right," he murmured, hugging her, "I'll tell you the island." She settled back and he sat up. "Once upon a time in the middle of the ocean there was a little island, and in the centre of the island there was a high hill . . ."

He spoke the familiar words of the story without really thinking of them, yet hearing them, like someone else's words, a kind of slow murmurous background beyond his thoughts. He thought of the three women, his mother, his wife, and his daughter; he thought of mirrors, a hall of mirrors, down which reflections went glancing in light. Out of my mother's womb, he thought, and felt a little embarrassed;—and then in my wife's contemporary womb I perpetuate my parents. Julie wriggled beneath the covers: bone, he thought, and flesh—and he wondered if the child Nell was carrying would be a girl or a boy. He spoke the words of the story to his daughter, and thought of Greta Johnson: she was in another continuity, outside this house; here there was only mother and wife and child together with him, and everyone else was far off, even his father. He finished the story and glanced at Julie. She lay quiet with closed eyes. He sat there beside her: reflections glancing in a long hall of mirrors, he thought; and, puzzled, he groped in his memory for some faint tantalizing clue, and suddenly remembered looking as a boy, in this very room or maybe in the kitchen, at a magazine cover on which was a man looking at

the cover of the very same magazine on which was a tiny man lookir at the tinier cover of the very same magazine on which—It was like th now, yes, overwhelming and elusive. He felt a little giddy, yet was pleas at recapturing the memory. It was good to be home, curious to be r membering what in this very same room or maybe in the kitchen—

Softly he stood up. Julie sighed deeply in her sleep. He waite crouching over the cot-head. Then slowly he backed away. At the do he stopped, glancing at the open window across the room, then went ba and gently drew the cover up closer around Julie's neck.

Then he went out of the bedroom and downstairs to Nell and h mother.

They had finished the dishes and were sitting at the kitchen tab talking. Bright light glittered on the porcelain table top, but out of t back hall and the pantry spilled the brown gloom he remembered ther and the scalloped edge of oilcloth on the pantry shelves thrust its o design out at him with a sudden urgency: once he had pulled a chair ov to stand on to get something from one of those scalloped shelves, the cha had tipped, he had bruised his head or his hand, his mother had rock him—

Both women looked at him as he came toward the table, his moth sitting angularly back in a straight chair with her hands in her lap, N leaning forward.

"Now look, good ladies," he said, "I don't want to cut in on you, b you're going to have the next twelve days for talking. It's nine o'clo now and *you*"—he pointed to Nell—"are going to bed!"

His mother took off her glasses. "Can't he leave us alone?" she sa to Nell.

"Quiet! Quiet!"

"Is he always so bossy?"

"Always," said Nell. But she stood up.

"I'd run away from him," said his mother. "I'd leave him. I'd g another man."

Nell laughed. "Tomorrow," she said. "I'll do it tomorrow. B right now I'll humor him and go to bed. I am tired."

"What he needs is a talking to and I'm his ma. Come here, To Barnaby!"

He pushed Nell toward the door. "Go on!" he said. "I've got argue with my mamma."

Nell slipped away from him and kissed his mother goodnight.

"I'll be up to see you in a minute," he called to her as she went out.

He sat down at the table; his mother laughed with gladness. "Y oppus!" she said.

"How're you feeling, Mother?"

"Good."

"I mean honestly now."

"Sure, honestly—good."

"Have you had any more trouble?"

"No-o-o!" she snorted contemptuously.

"I'll find out from Dad anyhow. You might as well tell me."

"Stop doubting your mother!—Oh, I'm *glad* you're home, Tommy!"

"Well, I'm glad to be home."

"I wish Dad was here. He felt so bad going away when you were coming. Honestly he just did everything to get out of it, but that other agent, I don't know whether you know him, he's a new one, Eberhardt his name is, and I guess I told you his wife is—"

"Wait, Mother," he told her, getting up. "I'll be back in a minute. I want to hurry Nell along up there."

Before she could answer he hurried from the kitchen. Nell was up in the bedroom undressing in the dark. From the doorway he watched her swift pale movements. "I'm getting *big*," she whispered.

"Good reason."

Mincingly she came close to him, on tiptoe. her bare feet and the flowing ankle-length gown making her seem very tiny. "You don't really like me this way," she murmured.

"Oh yes."

"Well, you seemed pretty much interested in giving that girl a ride home!"

He laughed. "She's in another continuity, Nell."

"*What?*"

"She's in another continuity."

"Well, I don't like her," Nell said, "and I never will. She better keep away from you while we're here!"

"What's the matter with you?" He tried to hold her but she twisted away; he caught the fresh bright fragrance of her perfume.

"She's a big dumb blonde," said Nell; she waited; he said nothing. "Do *you* think she's good-looking?" she said.

"No-o-o!"

"She's big as a house. I'd hate to see her if *she* got pregnant."

He laughed. "Look," he said, "why don't you go to bed?"

Slowly she sidled up to him, very small, very yielding when he seized her. But she pressed him back after a moment. He tried to hold her, his face in her hair. "What's that you've got on?" he murmured breathing in deep.

"Do I smell good?"

"Umm."

"I swiped some of your cologne." Laughing softly she slid out of his arms and ran on tiptoe to the bed, her gown full and floating. He was after her at once, but she lay primly under the sheet, smiling up at him. "No, Tom, don't. I *am* tired."

"Yes," he said, standing over her, "you're tired. Why don't you let me alone if you're so tired?"

"I'm a disturber of the peace," she said. "When are you coming to bed?"

"Oh, in a little while. I'll talk to Mother for a while now."

"Well, of course, if you'd rather do that—"

"Don't," he said.

"You'd better come soon," she said.

He kissed her. You're no good," he whispered. "I'm going over to see Greta."

"What did you say about her before? About a continuity?"

"She's not in our continuity," he repeated.

"Oh," said Nell.

"But she's our contemporary," he added.

"Oh, yes!" said Nell. "Goodnight now."

He looked over at Julie in the cot, remembering again with uneasiness that one day she would probably be taken away from him by one of her contemporaries, and there was nothing to do about it. At the door he waved to Nell. Then, shutting it quietly behind him, he went downstairs to his mother.

She was in the front room in the old big chair beside the dimly humming radio. The newspaper was in her lap, and the light beside her was bright; at the window beyond her he heard a pinching bug bump the screen once and then sluggishly buzz. But it was not till he was directly in front of her that he saw she was not reading. Her head was tilted forward and her eyes were closed. At that moment she looked her age, a gaunt stringy grey woman; from her he got his big loose bones, his ranginess; he looked at her hand lying limp on the chair arm, her blunt large-knuckled fingers with the wiry sinews stretching across sunken freckled flesh. Then instantly her hand quickened; her eyes opened and smiled at him; and at once her whole body was revitalized; energy came from her with an almost electrical urgency.

"Ha!" she said. "Taking my nap."

"Did you take your nap this afternoon?"

"No."

"You wrote me you were supposed to take one every day."

"A-a-h!" she cried, waving her hand at him. "That was a month ago!"

He laughed at the excited contemptuous face she was making.

"Nell all right?" she demanded, leaning toward him.

"Sure. She was tired, that's all. It was awfully hot driving."

"How's she been?"

"Well . . . pretty sick for a while there. I wrote you. She's all right now."

"I hope it's a boy," she said, grinning suddenly.

"Yes, we hope so too. But you can't do much about that."

She brooded. "Nell drinking much milk?" she demanded.

"What the doctor told her," he said. "I forget just what it is. Milk

and orange juice."

"She ought to have a lot of milk and vegetables. All kinds of vegetables, raw if she can take 'em that way. I remember with you, all I wanted was milk and carrots. *Raw* carrots. I used to scrape them and soak them in cold water. Dad thought I was crazy, but it was the best thing I could have eaten. Old Dr. Adamson told me afterward I couldn't have—"

"It's not that it really matters about it's being a boy," he interrupted. "I mean we really don't care."

"Oh, no!" she said emphatically. "No, *of course!* But still with Julie now it'd be nice if this time—"

"You and Nell," he said, "you both want boys. So does Julie, she wants a brother. Me, I'll stick to girls. I don't care."

"You always did like the girls, didn't you, Tom?" she grinned.

"Sure!"

"I *wish* Dad was here," she said, as if this was what they had been talking about all along, or was so intimately connected with the subject as not to make any real break. "You know that other agent, that Eberhardt, I think he shoves off all the *hard* work on Dad. I can't say anything, you know how Dad is. But now you take last month, it was just like this, Eberhardt was supposed to go out to Silver Lake . . . "

Her voice went on in its strong old familiar rhythm; he found himself listening to its sound, not its words. Then he realized that it was like his own voice earlier this night, a background to his thoughts, an unobtrusive steady flow of sound beyond him; he could listen to it or not, as he liked; and even without listening he could be aware of it without any distraction to the stream of his own thoughts. With Julie he could do this same thing, hear her and yet not hear her. But not with Nell; her voice was never a background; you had to listen when Nell talked. Maybe it was something in the blood, the way the blood flowed, the same blood in his mother and him and his daughter. And thinking of blood he let himself listen again; his mother was almost whispering now; she was leaning toward him, her eyes intent, her glasses upraised in one hand. " . . . and so Dad says, 'Well, if the doctor wants it that way why don't you get that Greta Johnson to do the real hard work for you, she's real nice and she's had experience, she can even stay with you while I'm out on trips.' But of course after I'd heard about her I didn't know what to do. Still, I had to get somebody."

"How long have you had her, Mother?"

"About four months. Since Easter. I wrote you when I got her but of course I didn't want to put things like this in a letter. You see nobody knows if she was ever married to this man, her mother says they were married and then separated, but she never says anything herself, not a word has that girl said since she's been in this house about that man or her having the baby—"

"This is Greta you're talking about?"

"Sure, Greta. You'd never think, would you? But I *must* say, if all

girls were as good workers as she is, and so *nice* to talk to—"

"How long ago was all this? I mean—"

"Oh, the boy's two years old now. I kind of wish she'd mention him sometime to me, I'd like to send him something. *You* know—"

"Does he live with her, at her folks?"

"Sure. And the best looking little boy, Dad says. He sees him sometimes when he drives Greta home at night. I've never seen him. You didn't see him tonight, did you?"

"No . . . "

Just then Julie cried in the bedroom.

"Well, it was late tonight, maybe his grandma put him to bed."

Julie cried again. Barnaby got up and ran on tiptoe to the foot of the stairs. He stood there a few seconds listening. Another continuity, he thought, she certainly is in another continuity. My contemporary—

His mother clicked off the almost inaudible radio. "Julie *sick?*" she whispered tensely.

He shook his head, waited an instant more at the stairs, then crossed the room to her. "She wakes up that way," he explained, softly. "I don't know what it is, dreams or indigestion or what. She goes right back to sleep, though."

His mother stood up. "We better go to sleep too," she whispered. "We disturb her, jabbering this way."

"Well, I'll lock up and put the lights out," he told her. "We'll jabber some more tomorrow.

She started toward the stairs, then checked herself contemptuously. "Every *night!*" she cried. "*Every* night I start climbing those stairs. Can't remember I sleep down here now!"

When she had gone out of the room he started snapping lights; he latched the front door; then, unbuttoning his shirt, went out on the side porch and stood looking up at the sky. There were no stars, only a kind of faint low-hanging luminosity. A damp wind blew. He was tired. Sometimes too much happened. He felt secure. Glad to be home. All mixed up and good. Tomorrow have to sort out his thoughts. About his mother and wife and daughter and Greta, yes, Greta. Thoughts about everything, mirrors and continuities. Tomorrow Julie will marry and my father will come home, tomorrow. He shut his eyes and the wind blew on his face.

Inside the house he heard his mother call him. She wants my father home and the baby a boy. "Here I am," he called, and went in.

She wore a flannelette gown; her hair hung in two sparse braids. He put his arm around her and led her to her bedroom. She smelled faintly of camphor or menthol.

"Go to bed now," she told him as he tucked her in.

In the darkness he could not see her face, but he bent down and her groping hand found him and patted his cheek.

He kissed her. "Good night, Mamma."

"Good night, Tommy!"

He shut the door quietly.

Then Julie cried again upstairs and undressing as he went he hurried to her.

It was warm and black in the bedroom, warm and black, and he stumbled toward Julie's cot. "What is it, honey?"

She wailed something wordless; he stretched out his arms to find her in the black room. "It's all right, honey, it's all right," he whispered. "We don't want to wake Mamma, honey."

"Story," said Julie, and sat up mumbling. "Story," she said.

He pressed her gently back on the pillow. "Once there was a little girl named Esmerelda," he murmured, "and she asked her daddy to tell her a story. 'All right,' he said, 'I'll tell you a story. Once there was a little girl named Esmerelda and she asked her daddy to tell her a story. "All right," he said, "I'll tell you a story. Once there was a little girl—" ' "

He slowed up and stopped. She lay quiet. Hurriedly he pulled off the rest of his clothes in the darkness.

In the big bed Nell sat slowly up. "Wha's a matter?" she whispered sleepily.

"Nothing. It's all right." He climbed into bed.

Very low and rich and intimate her laughter came in the secret darkness. "Silly story," she murmured. "Esmerelda."

She rolled away from him, her sleep-warm fragrance filling all the darkness. Faraway, faraway he heard the wind, and on the roof now slow black rain dropped quietly. Home, he thought, and secret darkness. Then she laughed again. "Silly," she explained drowsily, "same old thing, goes on an' on."

He felt sleep in the dark room hover over him, soft and compelling. "That's right," he murmured to her, "goes on and on." And beside him in the darkness Nell laughed with rich and sleepy delight.

A REPORT ON NAZI LITERATURE

# F. C. WEISKOPF:

# *Fear Under the Shiny Armor*

Fragt einer von den Jungen:
Wie weit ist unser Weg?
Du Blonder sollst nicht fragen,
Sollst gehen und sollst tragen . . .
—Friedrich Cerny

With Dr. Goebbels telling the German people that they must resign themselves to a "hard and relentless" war and that, if this war is lost, they will face an "inferno beside which all past hardships will pale"; and with Alfred Rosenberg hinting at "another war of thirty years," it is interesting to pay attention to certain symptoms in German literature which indicate that fears are creeping into the heart under "the shiny armor of Greater Germany."

Book production has sharply decreased in war-time Germany. Although 1939 had only four war months, the production of books was only 20,378 compared with 25,439 in 1938. In 1940, according to the magazine *Wirtschaft und Statistik,* the number of book titles (not the number of copies) was "slightly above 13,000." The slightest decrease was in books of military science—only 3.5%. Fiction showed a decrease of 37%. Still fiction represented the bulk of the German war-time book production.

The output of war songs, front stories, and novels in fieldgray is, of course, very big, and old Nazi hacks—like Hanns Johst, Hans Friedrich Blunk, Baldur von Schirach, Heinrich Zerkaulen, Max Jungnickel—are sharing in this mass production together with a score of new celebrities brought up under the supervision of Dr. Goebbels' Reichskulturkammer.

In spite of the steady flow of heroic and humorous "literature in fieldgray" there are on the lists of those publishers who try to retain some relics of literary prestige many books with "timeless" themes. Quite a few of them are best sellers. This fact alone indicates that there exists a large reading public preferring books of "escape from reality and the present" to the 100% Nazi literature. But in the last year the escape from reality has sometimes taken a very strange turn. Mysticism, apocalyptic visions, dreams are making their appearance on an ever-increasing scale.

S. Fischer, in pre-Hitler times Germany's foremost literary publishing house, presented as one of its top publications a "new sort of story" by Max Komerell, *Der Lampenschirm aus den drei Taschentüchern* (The Lampshade out of the Three Handkerchiefs). It tells of a professor of

psychology who arranges a party in honor of an Indian interpreter of dreams. The guests tell their dreams inspired by a lampshade made out of three handkerchiefs with grotesque drawings of clowns, strange flowers, disguised animals. The dreams and their various interpretations are interwoven with the utter and internal life histories of the guests and brought into most complicated relations with the drawings of the lampshade and with the mystical development of human history. No wonder that "the reading of this book requires an almost scientific study of the artificial texture of the spiritual threads, of the reflections of one soul in every other," as one of the laudatory reviews puts it. Amazingly enough, Komerell's book, called by the author "a story of yesterday," went into several printings.

Werner Bergengruen, one of the early converts to Nazism and bearer of several prizes, contributes to the best seller list of his publishing firm, Hanseatische Verlagsanstalt (Hamburg), an historical novel, *Am Himmel wie auf Erden* (In Heaven as on Earth). The story is based on an astrological prophecy from 1524. An astrologist reveals to Joachim I, Great Elector of Brandenburg, that a terrible deluge will on a certain day destroy the towns and villages of the country. In spite of all prevention the secret oozes through. An orgy of panic and fear begins: a "demonstration of the fear which is the proper diabolic heritage of the human kind." Bergengruen points out very clearly that the event causing the fear is irrelevant, and that the deluge could be replaced by any other threatening catastrophe. The publisher remarks therefore rightly that "no reader will overlook the fact of how timely the book is and how much it concerns every one of us who are cast adrift into dangerous zones." The fear of the deluge is "a sickness" and "there is no way of escaping a sickness by denying it." The Great Elector, the ministers, the councilmen of Berlin all break down under the impact of the panicky fear. But it is the Archbishop of Berlin in whose mouth are put these words full of timely allusions: "Do you think that I don't feel how the water gargles under every one of my steps? Do you think that I don't see how thoroughly washed away from below is the house in which I am the master and which I still try to beautify?" The only one who overcomes his fear is Clarion, physician and scholar, who knows that it is necessary "to enter into the new, even if this new should mean entire destruction."

The most characteristic work of the whole lot is Ernst Jünger's new novel, *Auf den Marmorklippen* (On the Marble Cliffs), also published by Hanseatische Verlagsanstalt (Hamburg), an historical novel, *Am Himmel* He belongs to that group of nationalistic writers of fairly high literary standards who were the forerunners of the "literary Elite Guard" of the Führer. Jünger, Schauwecker, Wiechert, and Ernst von Salomon glorified war and Reich long before Hitler came to power. They were extensively acclaimed in the first years of the Nazi regime. One after another of these old admirers of a strong Third Reich dropped out of the ranks of the Nazi literary propagandists. Schauwecker has not been heard of for

several years; Ernst von Salomon fled into timeless idyllic stories; Wiechert was even put into a concentration camp for a short time for having made a lecture to Munich students about the need for truth. And now Ernst Jünger has joined his old pals.

It is a strange story he tells in *Auf den Marmorklippen.* Two friends, former officers, are living in a solitary spot "after the bitter experiences of a victoriously lost campaign" (sic). Only twice a year they leave the Rutaceae Hermitage on the marble cliffs in order to eat and drink and fete in the lowland. Otherwise they are living in supreme solitude in their hermitage which is watched by the venomous "spear adders." The hermitage is a kind of fairy castle. There is a rich library comprising "the patriotic writers, the thinkers and classic authors of old and new times, but first of all botanical works and encyclopedias." In the evenings the two friends meet at the hall before the fireplace "where a small fire consumes the dry vine branches." They talk after the day's work in a "nonchalant manner with absurd quotations.' Sometimes one of the friends goes up to the herbarium and there continues his work past midnight. Both officers have become botanists after the unhappy campaign against the country of Alta Plana. "It is a strange and gay science they are carrying on in the hermitage. No system results from it, no fat book, only fragments, splinters and pieces in which for moments all the mysterious and colorful world may mirror itself." In doing so, the friends seem to have regained a "new security" after one lost in the war. But alas! the marble cliffs are not outside the world. Down in the lowlands is a rich country, Burgund, with old towns and rich villages. Then there is a highland called Campagna, inhabited by an untamed people of tough but hospitable shepherds. Behind the Campagna begins the forest and the swamp—the empire of a mysterious head forester (Oberförster). There is no indication whatsoever where all this is situated. The nomadic shepherds of the Campagna have strange Slavic names—Wenzel, Jegor, Belovar —and the towns of Burgund have old Germanic architecture. The country of Alta Plana and the war against it remain in mist and fog, and the whole story becomes even more fantastic with the introduction of the Oberförster.

The two friends have known the Oberförster a long time, having been members of the same secret order, Mauretania. In former times he was just a strange rich fellow who arranged crazy festivities. Now he is the owner and lord of the woods and swamps beyond the Campagna. He begins to send his hunters, "ugly bandits as if baked out of bloody dung," into the fields and pastures. As a sort of "illegal police," they commit various hooligan crimes. After them come the foresters who are even worse, pretending to survey the lands in a new way but in reality demonstrating their disdain of all "borders and boundaries and orders." This was the aim of their master: "He hated the plow, the seed corn, the vine and the tamed animals. He detested the gay settlements and the open human nature. He rejoiced only when ivy and moss were growing on the

ruins of destroyed cities, and when the bats were flying in the broken crossarched vaults of cathedrals . . . The boar pigs should burrow with their fangs the black earth of the vineyards, and the beavers should play on the ponds of the monasteries." The dark dictator of the forests and swamps terrorizes the whole country down in Burgund and up in the Campagna. He himself is not "so strong, but the fear veiled him, and I am convinced that his strength was to be found much more in this fear of him than in himself. He could only act when things had already begun to be shaken, but in such a moment his woods were the best place to try a grip on the lands beyond." What a strange portrait of a man written in Hitler's Reich! Ernst Jünger becomes even more eloquent. "The Oberförster administered the medicine of fear in small doses increasing them gradually with the aim of paralyzing the power of resistance. The role he was playing in these confusions, very cleverly devised in his woods, was that of a power of order. His lower agents in the organizations of the shepherds increased the anarchy, but the adept ones penetrated into the offices and boards of estimate and even into the monasteries, where they were considered as strong spirits able to doom the mob. Thus the Oberförster was like an evil physician who first fostered the sickness in order to inflict upon the patient the cuts he wanted to inflict."

Finally open warfare breaks out between the shepherds of the Campagna and the population of the Burgund towns on one side and the hordes of the Oberförster on the other. There Jünger depicts scenes of an "infernal nocturno" fertilized by recollections of the apocalyptic stories and the pictures of Hieronymus Bosch. The old world is destroyed in flames and a sea of blood. Death lays its veil over the dwellings of men and tamed animals. Fields are destroyed, cities brought to ruins, herds dispersed, men and women and children killed in scores of thousands. At the end the two friends sail from the marble cliffs bound for an exile in that strange land of Alta Plana against which they had formerly fought their victoriously lost campaign. The author's and publisher's admonition not to see in this book any allegorical picture of present times and to refrain from cheap interpretations, has obviously the same value as those denials put out in order to confirm rather than to deny.

# HARRY SLOCHOWER:

## *Hauptmann and Fallada: Uncoordinated Writers of Nazi Germany*

The question of what happens to art under Fascism generally re ceives unilateral treatment. The argument is simply that the two ar mutually exclusive. Art, it is pointed out, aims at the presentation o objective reality, whereas Fascism lives by distortion. Conversely, it i maintained, those who escape from the Fascist *Hexenküche* are thereb enabled to produce on an even richer plane.

The actual picture, however, is more complex. To be sure, in its thor ough suppression of opposition values, Fascism has no predecessor. Bu Fascism is unique mainly for it brutal *proportions,* not for its general at tempt at coordination. For no historic society has ever enjoyed sufficien harmony to permit the artist unrestricted depiction of full public truth This consideration is not without bearing on the work of exiled writer as well, whose art shows the effects of uprootedness. (For a treatment o the psycho-social alienation suffered by some of the exiles, see my articl "In the Fascist Styx: Toller, Stefan Zweig and Richard Wright" in *Th Negro Quarterly,* Autumn 1942.)

On the other hand, social repression has never succeeded in total si lencing of the esthetic dialectic—not even in Czarist Russia, as the ex amples of Dostoevsky and Chekov, among others, testify. For the attemp to regiment art brings into play more elusive factors than those operatin in the coordination of political expression. Dictatorial platforms can pre scribe what subject matter may or may not be treated. They may also se down that it should be approached with scorn or acclaim. But they canno compel the *persuasive how,* the choice of metaphor and the imaginativ vision. Just as Fascism can order people to laugh but cannot force then to *feel* like laughing, so it can legislate the theme but not the felt passio and the enthusiasm which, in the final analysis, "tell" us whether or no the artist is giving inner support to his theme. Fascism is primarily political weapon and, as such, can exert dictatorship only over the *direc* art, the exterior, public gesture. The unique character of the artisti method, on the other hand, is *indirection.* It makes its point by way of th suggestive analogy, through recourse to *overlap* situations and *overlap* val ues. Its "reality" is embedded in its poetic and fictionalized pointings In short, its language and theme are "secret" and "underground." An it is because art employs hidden weapons that the political Diktat ultimatel fails to meet it at the center. Even political writing has been able to mas itself by use of special vocabularies. What the political revolutionar does deliberately, *happens* to the artist

Yet political compulsions do leave marks of strain on the writer. The conscious or unconscious effort to "hide" may lead to a forced or obscure symbolism. If, in addition, the writer vacillates with regard to the social values in dispute, his symbolism tends to take on tortured incidents. This phenomenon is illustrated by Hauptmann and Fallada, who were anti-Nazis before 1933, but who have, by outward appearances, been coordinated.

The drama of Gerhart Hauptmann has recurrently dealt with border-line characters. The types, as well as the *Sonderlinge,* exhibit mimetic uniqueness testifying to an isolative individualism straining towards integration. The ground for this border-line status lies, for Hauptmann, in Nature herself and in man's "natural" demoniacal urge towards the adventurous.

As a poet of unusual sensitiveness, Hauptmann himself appears to have always been conscious of his "exceptional" status. In his autobiographical notes, he tells of his feeling of isolation in the family circle, and particularly of his strained relationship to his brother Carl, whose literary talents were in a more realistic direction. Hauptmann notes further that his background and early life made him familiar with the social form of the fratricidal war in that they brought to his attention the division between the middle class and the common people. He adds that when he became aware of this division, he thought it to be his mission to mediate between the two spheres. Indeed, Hauptmann's dramas are a lyrical response to the social wars and confusions of his time. They picture a kind of civil war in a human family, where fathers, sons and brothers turn against one another.[1] Thus, the Cain-Abel motif and the parricidal theme of Hamlet recur in his work. In particular, the struggle among brothers appears as the most horrible phenomenon of the human psyche.[2]

Hauptmann's post-Hitlerite work shows a continued, but more tortured preoccupation with the Cain-Abel theme. The reference is less direct, the form and setting more legendary. *Die Goldene Harfe,* Hauptmann's first dramatic work of the Hitler era, indicates the developed form.

The play was conceived as the wars within the German social democracy were crystallizing into the victory of Nazism. It treats of a conflict between a "weak" and a "strong" brother, both of whom are wooing the girl who plays the golden harp. The fraternal war is resolved when the "weak" brother voluntarily surrenders his claim, in the conviction that the prize "rightfully'" belongs to the stronger. Now, in the past, those

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1. " . . . Der Mensch, das ist ein Ding,
das sich von ungefähr bei uns verfing:
Zur Hälfte—wo?—wer weiss?—zur Hälfte hier.
Halb unser Bruder und aus uns geboren,
uns feind und fremd zur Hälfte und verloren." (*The Sunken Bell*)
Cf. the article by William R. Gaede, "Zum Verständnis des Älteren Gerhart Hauptmann," in *The German Quarterly,* March 1941.

2. The Cain-Abel theme is first explicitly treated by Hauptmann during the first World War. The war among brothers appears, however, in many of his dramas, notably *The Sunken Bell, Indiphodi, Veland,* and, most elaborately, the epic of *Till Eulenspiegel.*

of Hauptmann's male characters who are vital and in league with elemental nature usually emerged victorious, especially in the sex-war. But his pagan conquerors carried within them a Christian note which justified their victory on ethical grounds. No such morality is present in *Die Goldene Harfe*. Indeed, towards the end, one feels that, by his renunciation, the weak brother exhibits a disciplined power which is more difficult to sustain than by the unrestraint of his brother. Hauptmann's autobiography records an incident which may be relevant to this point. He tells of a time when he was assaulted on the street. After a while the combatants mutually agreed to stop fighting. But as Hauptmann got up, the man struck him in the eye. And Hauptmann comments: "Which of the two was the vanquished? . . . He had the victory of brutality, the victory of a broken promise, the victory of injustice in every sense; in short, he had the victory of baseness. I, on the other hand, . . . had the victory of strength, the victory of chivalry, the victory of conciliation."

Despite the fact that Hauptmann has not left Nazi Germany, it would seem that he has not been coordinated with the Hitlerite anonymity and martial ethics. As heretofore, he is still concerned with the differential and uncoordinated character, with what he once called "the adventure of the unique." In *Die Tochter der Kathedrale,* he has but recently once again expressed his abhorrence of war. Further striking confirmation that Hauptmann has kept to the "old truth" is offered by his latest autobiographical volumes, *Das Abenteuer der Jugend,* which, although published in 1937, are filled with thinly veiled heresies.[3] One of their leading motifs is the excoriation of Prussianism and of regimented discipline. The Bismarckian empire, we read, "blinded not only the Germans, but the world." On the other hand, Hutten's and Schiller's idea of spiritual freedom comes in for a panegyric. "We saw in him (Hutten) the fighter for a pure independent German spirituality, that is, for free research, free thought and free art." Hauptmann pays tribute to Chamisso (a poet of French descent), calling him "the most German poet." Perhaps most telling is Hauptman's favorable reference to Heine and his selected quotation (without comment) from Heine's revolutionary song of the weavers:

> Old Germany, listen, ere we disperse,
> We weave your shroud with a triple curse.

## II

In Hans Fallada's *Little Man What Now?*, published shortly before the Hitler rule, we find the following characterization of the Nazi, Lauterbach:

> He had no interest in anything. It was thus he joined the Nazis. In street fights he proved himself an extraordinarily astute young man who used his fists with almost artistic feeling for effect. Lauterbach's yearning for life was satisfied; he could get a fight almost every Sunday and sometimes on a week-day in the evening.

3. That, despite such heresies, the Nazis have taken no action against Hauptmann may be due to his age and to the acknowledged place he occupies in the history of modern letters.

A year later, Fallada was apparently coordinated. But one cannot abolish one's past by a signature or by verbalizations. One cannot sell one's soul by fiat. When Fallada "went over," he necessarily took with him his former anti-Nazi persuasion. The resultant seems to be a divided allegiance, a reserved obedience, revealed in Fallada's post-Hitlerite novels. These exhibit the violence inflicted on his personality by his outer and partial "yes." Fallada's earlier works, conceived in the "chaos" of the social democracy are, by comparison, quiet tales of modest, simple people. The novels written during the Nazi order deal with weird characters, people of extreme passions bordering on madness. These stories are crowded with eery happenings, and are set in macabre tones. The structure is loose, the symbolism tortured and weighted towards the masochistic. The motifs of devouring rats, of haunting owls, and of man as hunted by wolves crowd these novels. The artist seems troubled by the "blood and soil" he has accepted. His novels appear to be in the nature of symbolic retributions for guilty acts. *Once We Had a Child, Sparrow Farm, Wolf Among Wolves* may be taken as illustrating "the rats of remorse," plaguing the uncoordinated Nazi author.

The theme running through most of Fallada's post-1933 novels is the reconquest of homegrounds. In Hannes Gäntschow, the hero of *Once We Had a Child,* the method used to regain the ancestral farm is simple ruthlessness. But the victory Hannes gains by his savage means leaves him more alone and isolated than ever. In the Gäntschow ancestry self-sufficiency had long been the family's aim. Hannes' grandfather had set up a notice on a pole:

> This is Malte Gäntschow's house.
> Nothing bought—nothing sold.
> No visitors received.

In old Gäntschow, this autarchical trait extended beyond the "natural limit." He fell in love with his daughter, and after her death, identified himself with her to the point of wearing her clothes, sleeping in her bed, and finally inviting hungry house rats to devour him as he lay chained to the bed. Gäntschow's self-sufficiency is supplemented by an expansionist drive. Like their dogs, ("true progeny of the German sheep-dog"), the "Gäntschows find the farmyard too small a field for their energy and voracity. Yet, although they regard themselves "a race of men," for whom women exist only to bear children and to mind chickens, they are in fact "drunkards and wreckers, poachers and lechers" ("we became Christians only yesterday," the grandfather used to say). Hannes follows the ways of his forbears, and by his strong technique gains his objective. Fallada's novel pays surface admiration to the power and wild eccentricity of its hero. But its artistic objectivity passes another judgment. For it tells the story of a "hero" whose brutality ruins his marriage, and deprives him of whatever he has desired. At the end he realizes that "he had never loved a single human except himself, and now it was too late. His whole life lay before him, clear and cold, a desolate expanse of snow and ice."

The grandfather awoke to the possibility of love late in life. Likewise Hannes: "He also discovered, too late, that he was capable of love, and must now submit, in fetters of his own making, to be devoured by the rats of remorse."

*Sparrow Farm* seems at first glance a harmless fairy tale and bird allegory. The bank clerk, Guntram Spatt, tired and dulled by mechanical, documentary work, is advised by the clerk Bubo to change into a sparrow and fly to Sparrow Farm, of which he is the rightful owner. By means of a "brown hair," the clerk Guntram is transformed into a free sparrow. But as this metamorphosis takes place, he notices that an identical Guntram Spatt has taken his place at the desk. The "original" Guntram flies to Sparrow Farm, experiencing a number of amusing and weird adventures. He learns that, because of the law of primogeniture, there was a curse on the property, which was broken by an act of love on the part of his father. But Guntram finds that the farm is, once again, in the possession of sinister forces, led by Councilor Asio.

On the farm Guntram is confronted with many strange coincidences, the most baffling of which is that every character appears to have two faces. Guntram confuses Aunt Cecelia (who takes on the shape of a magpie) with his lovely cousin Monica. There is the Great Aunt with her grey hair and youthful face. Most perplexing of all, Guntram meets his double on the farm, the other "Guntram" he left at the desk. In the end, the original Guntram defeats the motley enemy and is united with Monica.

*Sparrow Farm* can be thoroughly enjoyed as a fairy tale. But it is clearly more than that. Its imaginative framework has fairly definite and amusing relevance to the brown magic and double bookkeeping operating since 1933.

Central to the story is the "Doppelgänger-motif." With the exception of the sinister plotter, Asio, every actor in the story appears split into a "good" and a "bad" character. (Bubo occupies a kind of midway position. He reminds Guntram of his ancestral heritage, encourages his sparrow adventuring, but in the end helps him to defeat his enemies.) This duality affects Guntram most. For, while he is freed by the magic of the brown hair, his "real" self remains fettered to the desk in the form of his double. "Yonder he sat and wrote, exactly as his habit was." Only one side of himself has got away from the "purgatory of paper." And when he arrives at Sparrow Farm, Guntram finds that his alter ego has also come to the farm, pretending to be the real Guntram. With the aid of Asio, the Master-Councilor, who in the guise of a malignant owl forges documents and concocts devilish schemes, the false Guntram attempts to gain possession of the farm and Monica. This alter ego is the evil aspect of the sparrow "movement." This is given point by the Interludes[4] with which Fallada breaks up the narrative, and where the false

4. These interludes clearly violate the framework of the usual fairy tale, and most obviously suggest the "real" theme.

Guntram states his theory of the sparrows as a superior race: "There is no older, braver or more intelligent race upon this earth than the sparrows. . . . All must serve his purpose by the will of the great Arch-Sparrow." He holds that "certain depressing human qualities . . . have wholly died out—such as truthfulness, justice, generosity, and kindness." And he proclaims the right of the sparrows to conquer the world by any means: "We sparrows—we do as we like with the possessions of this world . . . We sparrows care nothing what another thinks of us: we take and do what we like, and on that principle we become the mightiest race upon earth." Finally, he expresses their nihilistic aims. The sparrows have now reached the "third" and highest stage of pecking, namely "pecking for pecking's sake at which we sparrows are past masters . . . and the greater the devastation, the more glorious is the achievement."

*Sparrow Farm* may thus be regarded as depicting the split character and ambiguity of the forces around the "little man," producing an inner war within him. It is the story of the "brown" magic used to give him the illusion of liberty, while actually keeping him bound. But the fostering of these illusions has unloosened forces which, in Fallada's fairy tale, at least, result in his actual freedom and in the conquest of the Mephistophelian pretenders. Guntram, like Hannes, wins his ancestral farm, but where Hannes lost his beloved by his "heroic" ruthlessness, Guntram wins his Monica.

In *Wolf Among Wolves,* Fallada leaves the magic world of *Sparrow Farm* and the legendary island community of *Once We Had a Child* for the historic realism of the post-war German inflation. Once again Fallada depicts his "little man." But now he is reduced to a veritable passionless marionette. The hero in *Little Man What Now?* still had the illusion of his white-collar status. Here, the inflation with its crazy fluctuations makes for completest dislocation. The one pillar which has not been affected by the war—money as a fixed common denominator of value—now also crumbles. In the ensuing chaos of valuation, Fallada's men and women are tossed about much as are the characters of Dos Passos and Döblin. The rule of chance has enervated them to the point where they are hardly conscious of their suffering. Even if they had enough spirit left to resist, they would not know whom to strike at. It is an age in which there is no trust and confidence in men and things, a devouring age of hunters and hunted. "Sons turned against parents, one hungry pack bared its teeth against another . . . Youth against Age, recklessness against slow deliberation, blood against cold flesh." The world is daily becoming poorer in values, even as the machines are making it richer by the naughts of the inflation. Living itself has become a gamble in which one can neither win nor lose, live nor die. The theme of the inflation becomes the metaphor of the life led by Fallada's characters. In the case of the central character, Wolf, it is more than a metaphor. He takes to reckless gambling itself, not as an adventure, but as a pattern of living. This "freedom" is carried over into the novel's structure. The story is broken up

into disparate segments, moves back and forth, somewhat in the manner of Dos Passos' *USA*.

Wolf Pagel drifts away from the formal world of his mother, the aristocratic countess with her sense of strict decorum. He goes to the other pole, to the lowest depths, where he meets Petra. But before he can be finally united with her, Wolf must himself go through the gamut of the social pit. A series of fortuitous misunderstandings leads Wolf to abandon Petra. He leaves to take a position on a country estate.

But the instability of the city extends to the country. Here, too, the gambling spirit rules; here, too, there was no rest or security. Fallada's long-cherished agrarian talisman is no longer effective. The country still produces concrete "goods." But the oscillations of the *Valuta* render them almost valueless in "exchange." The land, too, is afire, and fear invades the peace of the fields as well. The old Geheimrat of the estate is also being busy, calculating, and brutal with his workers, and all without a sense of direction. The members of his family seek excitement in the absence of vital interests. His granddaughter Violet is the most tragic product of this coreless Junker tradition, going mad in the course of an adolescent love affair with a lieutenant.

What saves Wolf from disintegration is the image of the girl he had forsaken. Without being aware, it is her inner stability and personal dignity which gives him strength to hold out. Her lowly roots make her sensitive to living values. She had long ago, at the very time when everybody was feverishly concerned with money, made the discovery that to be without money need not spoil one's existence. Wolf returns to Petra, "the rock" of his existence. Wolf's rehabilitation is further indicated by his plan to become a doctor of mental diseases.

There are some extraordinary features in this novel of Germany's inflation period written by a coordinated writer. One of the central arguments of Nazidom was the disorder and chaos of the inflation. And the endlessly repeated leitmotif was that the inflation was the scheme of Jewish financiers and a criminal "red" regime. The Nazis constantly kept dinning this point into the ears of the Germans, knowing that they would prefer almost anything to a repetition of the mad dizziness they had experienced. Yet *Wolf Among Wolves* contains not a single reference to the Jew as the devil in this scheme, and only passing reference to the Weimar Republic.[5] Instead, the enemy is located in the Junker nobility and the gambling spirit of the age.

In view of Fallada's neglect of those factors which the Nazis made focal in their historical analysis, it seems pertinent to suggest that Fallada's depiction of the gambling spirit, the temper of living on chance and risk is translatable into the spirit of Nazism itself, gambling everything in the interests of the "next thousand years." The point of the novel's rele-

5. The novel is also significant for other omissions. The passive Ruhr resistance is mentioned but not the role which the Nazi hero, Schlageter, presumably played in it. Also, there is no reference whatsoever to the Nazi movement which got under way at this time.

vance to Nazidom is further suggested by the account of a "Putsch" organized against the government. It is not *called* the famous Hitler Putsch which turned into a fiasco. Yet almost all the elements which entered into that Putsch seem present in the one Fallada describes with ridicule. "The Reichswehr and the Black Reichswehr in it; that is, the old soldiers and the young ones, against a government which printed worthless money, which had given up the Ruhr fight, and which wanted to 'agree' with the French. One didn't need to reflect about such things—the *Putsch* was in order." This organization contains treacherous and opportunistic elements, which include the lieutenant who casts a devilish charm over fifteen-year-old Violet, seduces, and then forsakes her. The Putsch fails, and the lieutenant believes that its failure is due to the fact that Violet has disclosed the hiding place of an ammunition dump. At this point, the author introduces the following parenthetical comment:

> (But neither the Lieutenant nor his superior now talking of treachery, arrived at the thought that a thing must indeed be rotten to be overthrown by the chatter of a fifteen-year-old girl; that it could only be an adventure without any life-giving spark of an idea; that they themselves were all trapped by the glittering and corrupt enchantments of a wicked age, and were thinking of the moment instead of the eternity beyond—even as the bank-note machines in Berlin were working only for the day and the hour.)

The dualism which runs through Fallada's work is an aspect of a split within the personality of the artist in his relation to his past and present scene. He, too, must be glad that the post-war inflation came to an end. Yet the coordinated rule which came about a decade after the mark had been stabilized, brought a new and even more disastrous inflationary temper. With it, the Nazi conception of the hero becomes a public imperative. But Fallada's work has ever been in sympathy with the simple and modest, and has remained so. He is more at one with them in their misfortunes than he is with the heroic success-characters. In the new order, Fallada's little men and women count for naught. Here, they can neither take nor give; that is, they cannot be human.[6]

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6. In his latest novel, *Kleiner Mann, Grosser Mann—Alles Vertauscht,* Fallada presents another variant of this theme. A simple insurance official becomes heir to millions. But his wealth stifles him, and he becomes the butt of his subordinates. Only after he has given up his millions does he regain his former security.

# LEWIS FISHER:

## *Military Secret*

No mist rises from the sea; yet a thicker air whitens the sand and is, itself, sand-colored. It soothes and softens headlands at the beach's end, high pastures that are tarnished now, their underlying rocks gone light and porous in the shades of brick. Small waves, though a mere breathing of the ocean while it wakens, faintly trill their particles of sand. From behind the land, light gathers and the day is started, but the high white cloud has not yet felt the heat and broken up to let through sun. It only sifts the light, to spread it evenly. There are no shadows.

The horses move from time to time as one hoof and then another settles with the running sand, though they are in no deeper than will let the water rise and fall between the fetlock and the knee. Only the pair with riders stand so; the rest of the herd plays freely up and down the beach. One under a man may whinny at the freer members, or brush back his head to see them run, but neither tries to break their loose formation as a team. The two soldiers, naked, bareback, sit knee to knee, inclining a little toward each other with the near feet hanging lower, speaking softly while they watch the day begin to ripen. Their thighs and buttocks are flattened out to rounder edges under their own weight, and they welcome the warmth from sharp horse fur. The two look forward to their swim but do not hurry. They find it sweet to sit and let the motionless night project its small peninsula into the morning.

Pedro, on the red mare, and José, on the bluish mottled white, belong to cavalry, yes, but do not think of war. War is imperceptible at its distance from this gulf along the western bank of Mexico. The skin of Pedro's leg seems less dark than that of José's near it because his horse has lent him brightness where its sorrel shades him. Now, west of the white cloud, a strip of blue has formed that will gradually widen till it touches the Sierras in the distant east. That is how the morning has arranged itself; the cloud will slip away entire instead of breaking up.

"What do we wait for?" Pedro says. "The ocean gets no warmer, while I can feel the steady heating of the corporal."

"We don't wait. It is a moment and we taste it. Let him heat."

"True," says Pedro. "It is good for the horses."

"Impossible to give the horses their refreshment in an instant. Permit them to soak their hooves a little. Neither sometimes does one catch horses instantly. I do not feel a pressure to be back. If I had a pocket and there were tobacco in it I could smoke a cigarette with pleasure."

José takes a deep extra breathing of the palpable moist air. "Still, the smell of salt does well enough," he says contentedly. "I would only smoke if I could have a cigarette already lighted in my mouth by wishing."

Some pelicans fly past and one makes his awkward expert dive. He comes up, congratulates himself, lays back his head, and swallows. The rest have lighted, a bit farther down, with care in stretching out of necks and feet and wings, and finally a readjustment of their shoulders and necks to dignity. "Just now," José adds, "it would be unfair in us to spoil their fishing."

"See Tona's ears," Pedro says, stroking under the red mane. "She thinks about the pelicans with her ears. I take my hand and tell her they have rights here. She understands the fingers. Yes, big Tona, Warm-to-sit-on, let the ears be quiet."

José half hears Pedro's words, as, when the horses stir, he half feels his knee—a smoother cooler touch than the hairy touch supporting him. But only half notices because he finds himself and Pedro and the horses very small among the distances of sky and beach and headlands, the sea before him and the sense of mountains far behind. He and Pedro sink to nothing more than dots here, and vaguely time has shown its stretch away in two dimensions.

"Some men," he says, "have had their childhood by the ocean. For us who grow up inland where the corn is, that's difficult to think about. When the rain comes we have places where we swim, while any day throughout the year they have been shining wet all over and have eaten fish. For us when we had water it flowed steadily in one direction, or was a puddle only, while they, little things, have sat where first the current washed their bellies, then their backs. Now that men have brought us here it is just as if we take one tiny moment and learn quickly that strange way of being kids. The time we need—we steal it and have that secret from the corporal."

"I feel his eyes." Pedro prays: "Let him think suddenly of someone else. Let the cook worry him, or those finding wood. Let him not feel rushed about the horses." The mare stirs under his communicated impulse.

"He has many cares," José says, bringing Pedro back into this calm. "I do not wish to be a corporal. He has shoes on, to walk about and think of what he sees. Let your feet hang down in peace. They'll soon enough be dressed; mine do not speak yet. He knows the horses are well trusted to us. They are colts too along the sea."

Pedro urges breakfast, what the rest may do to it, but really knows the squad has beans in plenty for the time of this encampment. Again he lets himself subside into the spaciousness that José still wants no action to disrupt. His off hand slides backward to the rump and pats there. Green is more pronounced now through the water. Pedro likes staying but needs to have another justify it, and his feet gladly postpone the cage they'd never worn until the army caught them.

José goes on bringing his flinty upland cactus of a past out here to share the wet, for once drenching it thoroughly in softness, as at a water hole he's seen his mother souse their sun-bleached garments and delight her hands. " . . . The year our corn parched we had to move and might

have starved for lack of water. The burros cried all night—not their ordinary chatter but terrible with the sound of dryness. They had no the understanding of it that helped even me, a child. By great fortune my father's brother lived in a village where the wells were still supplied, and he and his village fed us through that season. We returned and this had never happened since. But all these years I hear the burros as they made that journey. Only this sound can maybe cover it, a drone that goes on longer than any memory of the sharpest cry. I should like to hear this enough to keep when I am back there."

"We can take it with us in a shell," says Pedro. His impatience grows or his courage to stay lessens, with each word José adds to their tardiness. The playful running of a horse behind him beats the ground into apprehension such as drums arouse.

"I'll store this against another drought and have it like the juices in a maguey . . ."

But Pedro suddenly leans farther toward him to put one hand on either mane. He calls out in a laugh. He slaps. He starts them leaping forward, changing José into a mood of rush and action before his old mood has a chance to protest. Hungrily the team accept permission for their splash and flight, though in a moment they are at a depth that rein them. The boys' feet know now what the coldness of the water is, and like it.

The horses are slowed, yet keep this privilege of pushing hard. Presently their tails fan and are carried on the swell like seaweed. At that point they are turned round and made to halt again.

Pedro stands on broad Tona's rear and faces seaward. José, not to be the same, hunches himself, sitting near the tail of his horse, and lifts his feet to rest against the withers. He will go backward, and looks down in water where the dappled white fades mistily beside the red. He glances at Pedro, laughs, cries "To shore!", slams down his hands—and the jumping horses topple both of them. During the flash of his somersault he sees straight Pedro shot into the water. In that instant of the wave's spreading, Pedro is the stamen of some new-opened white hibiscus with still a greenness at its base. Then José has shut his eyes, being always an inlander, and in the fiercer contact stabs about for upwardness and air.

They swim now, calling to each other, shouting to the horses. No pelicans are in sight through all the distance north and south. It is José who is finished with the swim first, though not in the thought of any secret from their corporal whom even Pedro has forgotten. José stands on the beach, sleeking himself with downward strokes that shake away the water. The horses all come nosing nearer as if José could be hiding grain or anything. Tona and the white let themselves be caught, and José stands between them holding both as Pedro walks up out of the ocean.

José hands Pedro the red mare and jumps on the white. He sits while Pedro flicks the crystals with his free hand, Tona raising and lowering her head, receiving no attention. Finally Pedro sees her, turns and thanks

ner with his searching hands and with his voice. He lets her start and takes some running steps before he throws himself across her saddle hollow.

"Beans," he shouts.

"The corporal," José calls as his salute.

They canter off in opposite directions to hem in the other horses and put them on their tracks toward camp. Gradually the group cements itself. José and Pedro draw closer as they follow, and behind the troop come pounding into camp together.

# JOHN WALLER:

## *The Nieuw Amsterdam*

*From Durban to Suez*

On Friday we sailed from Durban, a friendly country
Of rickshaws and laughter, whose white buildings
Lean to the sun and are tall, a land of oranges,
Tomatoes and black servants, of decorous evenings.

It is easy to get lost in the corridors of this large ship
Winding to light brown and cream; the bewitched voyager
May find himself entering a cinema, stand bewildered in a kitchen
Or captured by wandering music, fair to traveller.

Furious and as certain as history, she divides the water,
Alive in her destiny; strong with the cool assurance
That swept Van Tromp up the Thames and after the struggle
Gave to the Silent and Maurice victory in abundance.

The walls of my cabin are lined with mirrors and white leather,
The beds are soft, the lights are hidden or shaded;
Cupids are hoping to haunt here, envious of soldiers
And eager for hours when loves not deaths are paraded.

Now solitary from family or friend these cheerful hearts
Bring help to the journey, mindful always of homes
Lost in a mist, or like Tom the barman
Smile only to serve, in their eyes other days, other times.

# R. P. BLACKMUR:

# *A Rage of Goodness:*

## The Idiot *of Dostoevsky*

We have here, almost plumb in the middle of Dostoevsky's work, a novel which in its major intention tried to dramatize God's gift of the good and perfect individual man beating down the proud evil of all human society by his mere example. The rest of his great work may, with a little stretching, be described as quite the opposite, as the attempt to dramatize the substantial goodness in human society beating down the obsessed pride, either carnal or intellectual, of evil individuals—or of individuals who, if not evil, were in their confusion dominated and driven by evil. We think of Raskolnikov and Svidrigailov, of Stavrogin, of Ivan and Dimitri Karamazov and how all of them are driven to find goodness in the lacerated, the injured, the insulted, the humiliated—in the sink and sewage of human society. Here, in *The Idiot,* we have Myshkin, a hero of another kind, whose heroism consists almost altogether in his lack of it: a hero who makes no effort to show himself and what he feels: that is to say, a positive hero, a hero who is already there, and who has therefore nothing to do, a complete image, idol, or ikon, before whom others, as they are drawn to him, must in the end abase and humiliate themselves. That Myshkin, the positive hero, is himself engulfed in the process, and indeed destroyed beyond human redemption, is a natural and necessary result. The fault of the positive hero is the most fatal of all faults, that he has none. He has no being, no existence, apart from the vision of those who believe in him. He is ideal only, an insight or aspiration divorced from the human soil out of which he sprung. You cannot uproot goodness and have it live any more than you can altogether eradicate evil.

This is not how Dostoevsky meant, intellectually, for the history of Myshkin to come out, but it is how, imaginatively, it had to come out. The conception of goodness out of which he worked offered no other possible solution; and his conception of goodness was lodged actually, like his conception of evil, in the image of its own double: which is to say, its own ruin. He was mistaken in thinking that the idea of pure goodness could be dramatized so as to dominate the kind of good and evil men and women he could create; but his imagination went beyond the mistake of his intellect and overwhelmed it. Thus we have a double, perhaps a triple, drama in the finished book. There is the drama of Dostoevsky's own conscious attempt to create his positive hero. There is the dramatic fable of the good man in an evil society. And there is, as it were creating itself underneath and absorbing the others, the drama, the immitigable and inexhaustible drama, of the good man who, in submitting to evil, is doomed not only to become evil but to enact evil without losing a jot of his goodness. No wonder,

thinking of Myshkin, Dostoevsky thought that submissiveness was "the most fearful force that can exist in the world."

Let us explore the three dramas and the relations between them, uniting them first, as they are united in the book, by some consideration of the title. I do not know how Dostoevsky came to call his book *The Idiot*, but I do know that playing with any of the other obvious titles only increases the inevitability of his choice. The book tried of course for the title that all Dostoevky's books tried for, The Life of the Great Sinner, but it had too little scope, as even *The Brothers Karamazov* had too little scope. Yet the flavor of that alternative should be kept in mind as the activating flavor of consciousness almost all Dostoevsky's characters come to in their moments of crisis: they regard themselves as living the lives of great sinners. A more likely title might have been The Epileptic, for the moment of vision and the scream that plunges the vision into intolerable darkness is in the recurrent heartbeat of the book as it is the recurrent clarifying *and* mutilating fate of Myshkin himself. Epilepsy is Le Grand Mal in the simple medicine of the past, as we should say that his goodness is Myshkin's Great Ill; for indeed the two are in the final drama of the book united. But such a play on words would have furnished an under-title at best, a quicksand of a title in which the book would have sunk two-thirds out of sight. *The Idiot* has advantages that none of the alternatives possess, and has besides a certain necessity *vis à vis* the *good* man in action—again, and always, having reference to Dostoevsky's deliberate idea of goodness. The word *idiot* is luckily the same in English as in Russian, with much the same history and much the same meanings. Fundamentally it means a private person or a layman, and by development a person who does not know what he is talking about, a fool in word or action, though with no sense that either word or action lack significance or responsiveness. It is the name we give the sense of incapability, of impotence, that attends some of our deepest responses. We all of us feel a sense of kinship with idiocy which in moments of peril we actually sometimes recognize, as when we say of a man in great terror that he was a chattering idiot, and know exactly what he felt like. Or again we use the word to measure the limits of intellect, as when we say of a problem that is beyond us that it has reduced us to idiocy. Beyond that, or on a good level rather than a bad level, we ally idiocy with kinds of generous or unthinking folly, as when we call a man an idiot for giving either his money or his mind away without thought for himself, and in calling him an idiot mean to praise him for what we would ourselves do were we less selfish. Still higher in our levels of meaning, or still deeper in our instincts, we often believe that acts of folly, of rash courage, win through at least as often as acts of thoughtfulness. In fact, the ancient beliefs that fools and madmen bear the wisdom and prophecies of the gods, have not at all died out with the gods but have survived them. We believe, for example, that he who speaks without thinking may at least speak what he feels or even what he "really" thinks. Similarly, as any practicing spiritualist and many surrealist poets will tell you, idiocy, or the dive beneath the syntacti-

cal mind, is the only available credible vehicle for second sight and intuition and feeling. All these levels of meaning return us to the idea of the idiot as the lay or private substitute for God who is blighted in the attempt to do God's work. That is the role of the idiot as Myshkin, and that is the fate of Myshkin as idiot.

So much for the advantages of *The Idiot* as title; they rise from long and vital associations and flow naturally through the symbolic reaches of the reader's mind. But there was a necessity in the title, too. Only by making his positive hero an idiot in the eyes of the other characters (and in some degree in the eyes of the reader) could Dostoevsky envisage, that is, give face to his goodness. Only so could he make credible in a created figure the kind of goodness that Myshkin exemplified. You cannot make a man talk or think like God, because your reasoning powers are clearly inadequate: they will miss the point and involve you in all sorts of inadvertent blasphemy. This is not from lack of knowledge of God, or even from lack of skill in that knowledge; it is due rather to the nature of the medium in which that knowledge comes to you: the medium of feeling, direct perception, intuition: a medium which unites itself with the whole sensibility which it expresses. You become a submissive, a receptive agent; you feel God as goodness within you and within what you suffer, and the love you might otherwise (in the absence of God) build with pride, becomes pity which builds within you at the expense of every possible humiliation of spirit and every possible ignominy of mind and body. It is only the idiot Christ, the mind reduced to childish directness of perception—the perception of goodness through the means of pity—that the individual man can reach. That is, the man who is to be the purely good man, must divest himself not only of the love of created things but must also divest himself of those attributes which he has created in himself and by which he competes with God. He must get down to instinct, which God gave him, and which reason only impairs. Idiocy is the condition of the great divestment; for in idiocy instinct is set to operating with the least possible impairment by reason; or at any rate idiocy is the condition which we are most likely to accept as the limit at which, as it is approached, instinct works best, and at which, as it is reached, it is obliterated. Idiocy, then, is the very condition of dramatic necessity for the novelist who would, like Dostoevsky, attempt to dramatize instinctive goodness and pity as the essence of Christianity.

How far Dostoevsky would have accepted this argument is doubtful; he would most likely have objected that it reasons too much, and insisted that what he had in mind goes without saying; yet it is only by following some such argument that his figure of Myshkin becomes dramatically credible within the limit of Dostoevsky's declared intention. To support my argument I would cite the following items from the book itself. There is, first, the story Myshkin tells in Part I of the persecuted Swiss girl Marie, who thought of herself as a great sinner but who had been actually only greatly humiliated—by her mother, by her church, by her community. Myshkin,

taking pity on her, "corrupted"—that was the community's name for it—corrupted the children of the village into attending her through her mortal illness. Thus she died happy, saved by pity. The children seemed to her "like birds beating their wings against her window and calling to her every morning, 'Nous t'aimons, Marie,'" Myshkin goes on to relate how after this, Schneider, the doctor who had been caring for his idiocy, told him that he was a child. He told me, says Myshkin, "that I was a complete child myself, altogether a child; that it was only in face and figure that I was like a grown-up person, but that in development, in soul, in character, and, perhaps, in intelligence, I was not grown up, and that so should I remain, if I lived to be sixty." Myshkin says he laughed very much, but added that in one thing Schneider was right. "I don't like being with grown-up people... Whatever they say to me, however kind they are to me, I always feel somehow oppressed with them, and I am awfully glad when I can get away to my companions; and my companions have always been children, not because I am a child myself, but simply because I always was attracted by children."

Secondly, there is the anecdote Myshkin tells Rogozhin about the woman who crossed herself at her smiling six-weeks old baby, and who when he asked her what she did answered him: "'God has just such gladness every time he sees from heaven that a sinner is praying to him with all his heart, as a mother has when she sees the first smile on her baby's face.' That," Myshkin went on, "was what the woman said to me almost in those words, this deep, subtle, truly religious thought—a thought in which all the essence of Christianity finds expression; that is the whole conception of God as our Father and of God's gladness in man, like a father's in his own child—the fundamental idea of Christ." It is not for nothing that directly after this Rogozhin exchanges his gold cross for Myshkin's tin cross and takes him to his mother — herself an idiot, understanding nothing of what was said—to be blessed. Only an idiot can bless an idiot.

Thirdly, there is Myshkin's outburst against Catholicism just before he breaks the Chinese vase at the Epanchins' party, an outburst which is about as near as Myshkin the idiot or Dostoevsky the author can come to an intellectual expression of what is meant by fundamental Christianity. What his outburst amounts to is a plea for revolt against intellectual authority, against grown-up pride of all sorts, and an insistence on the meekness of the child, the submissiveness of the idiot. "O, we need to have resistance at once, at once! Our Christ whom we have kept and they have never known must shine forth and vanquish the West." The depth which Dostoevsky believed this is attested by the epileptic fit into which Myshkin falls immediately after his declaration. The moment before a fit was for Myshkin the highest clarity man could reach and was worth all the rest of life; and this particular moment does indeed reflect the central illumination of Christian meekness in about as passionate language as Dostoevsky was capable of. Nor should we complain that a plea for meekness, for submissiveness, for non-resistance to evil in the physical sense, should be expressed in violent and intolerant terms. There is no fanaticism so violent

as that of humility cornered, humility humiliated by outward oppression Christ ended in bloodshed, no less violent in that it was his own; and n Christ was more violent than the meek and childlike Christ Dostoevsk saw—in life visibly, in himself incipiently, and in the created figure o Myshkin the idiot potentially.

It is because of that violence, perhaps, that Dostoevsky is sometime thought of as a Russian version of the Pauline Christian. Certainly Pau and Dostoevsky shared a violent eloquence; certainly both insisted on th charity of understanding as a prerequisite to salvation—both making thei insistence in such violent and fanatic tones as to obscure their argumen in the vehemence of its expression. Both in short were Protestants. But think their similarity ended there. It is true that the ideas of Paul migh have developed into those of Dostoevsky, but it would not have been th Paul that we know. For us Paul united spirit and intellect, whereas Dos toevsky united spirit and feeling. Pauline Christianity—western Chris tianity—imposes an order on human society capable of making room fo the disorder of human lives. Dostoevsky's Christianity works rather th other way around, and would limit the possible order of human society t its capacity to submit to the disorder, as it must seem, of feeling and in stinct and intuition. It is thus that Dostoevsky identifies Roman Catholi cism with socialism, and sometimes with liberalism generally; he saw tha it ought to have been so identified as a matter of logic. And it is thus tha he identified Russian Orthodoxy, and its emphasis on suffering as the *con dition* of salvation rather than, as in western Christianity, merely inci dental to it, with the extreme conservative form of the state of the Tsars For him, in his extreme moments, a society must needs seem to totter wit corruption in order to prepare for the ordeal of salvation. He needed con fusion and dismay and general gross unnecessary suffering, and not onl in the heart where these things always are, but in the society around him he needed them as a forcing bed in which his insights became images. A both a novelist and a prophet must, Dostoevsky took what he needed, insist ing it was all there was.

We must say that for him there was nothing else; but we cannot say i was Pauline; it was too single a theft for Paul. Paul was a dualist in th lasting sense, or at any rate up through the dual mystery of the resurrec tion of the dead; for he saw always opposed man's higher and lower na tures, spirit and flesh, god and devil, the heavenly order and the worldl order. If you think that Dostoevsky saw these opposites also, you have no clearly looked into the soul of the idiot.

The idiot is the living image, not of Pauline, but of primitive Chris tianity, the Christianity of a world ignominiously on its knees, knowing onl that the next moment the face is in the mud. Dostoevsky's dualism—hi doubles of the self-willed and the meek, of the intellectually proud and th spiritually humble—is only the dramatic prelude to a monistic collapse int an undifferentiated groveling humiliation. Thus the two Christian fable he was never tired of rehearsing were the fable of Christ and Mary Mag

dalen (in *The Idiot* the story of Myshkin and Marie) and that of the child-likeness of Christ, which is the general fable of Myshkin as it is of Alyosha in *The Brothers Karamazov*. For Dostoevsky as for Yeats Christianity "brought a fabulous, formless darkness in." It is not that Dostoevsky saw men and women in action with the oneness of the Essenes; he saw and felt them in sufficient variety; but that he tried to bring them back to that oneness, and tried especially so in *The Idiot*.

The trial was made by exposing a series of characters—Nastasya, Rogozhin, Ippolit, Aglaia, Ganya, Keller, Radomsky, Lebedyev, and General Ivolgin—to the fearful force of Myshkin's submissiveness and to the creative force of his instinctive judgment or intuition: his reaction as he felt them press upon his submissiveness: their reaction as they feel the goodness of his presence and beyond it. All these characters are haunted by their other selves, which Myshkin brings into action, for good or for evil, for pride or for humility, as the case may be. This Myshkin is able to do because he alone is without a ghost. His submissiveness brings *him* nothing, because he is already there; yet to the others it brings everything. He exists to drag out of them, to absorb, their other selves, to perfect them, so to speak, by mutilation and deprivation.

We shall see in particular how these matters proceed with the different characters; but we have first to set up some sort of images for the submissiveness and the instinct that Myshkin uses to go along with the images of Christianity out of which they sprung. The submissiveness in Myshkin may be characterized as having the attractive force of the abyss; it is a version of that gulf which Pascal, as Baudelaire's poem says, always carried within him. It is the abyss of insensibility for which acute sensibility always hankers; it is the haunting possibility. But, not only a gulf of emptiness, it is also a dreadful reservoir; there is something positive to be got from it: precisely the sickening fall into salvation, that fall in which one leaves everything behind except the self, in which one arrives, still falling, in the vertigo of paradise. Who would know better than an epileptic what that fall was like? Epilepsy is not only the Great Ill, it is also the Falling Sickness; and the great scream of the fit is wrung out of the victim at the moment of falling. It was to the possibility of that scream, as much as anything, that Myshkin's friends reacted, as it was more than anything to that scream that Myshkin himself submitted and which he also invoked as a matter of course.

He invoked it, because it set him free. Like Ivan Karamazov, Myshkin was one of those to whom all things were permitted, and indeed Myshkin is in the writing of his drama much more like Ivan the damned than like Alyosha whose goodness he superficially resembles. If we think of Ivan and Myshkin together we shall see that the permitted pride of the one and the permitted instinct of the other come to much the same thing, intolerable suffering and humiliation, ending for both in the obliteration of sensibility. The man who acts out of pride and the man who acts out of instinct are equally driven and deprived creatures to the extent that they act purely.

The damnation of the one is equivalent to the blessedness of the other, at least in this world. Each is beyond the possibility of balance or sanity, and each therefore comes to humiliation. There is another consideration, too, which but perfects the equivalence of pride and instinct. Both the wholly proud man and the wholly instinctive man are adequate only to those situations which are prepared for, patterned, and petrified: situations to which one needs to make no adjustment, which one does not need to reason about. How can one *not* see either instinct or pride except as brought to confusion? The great naturalist Fabre gives an account somewhat as follows of an experiment with the Pine Processionary caterpillar. Noticing that like many caterpillars this species followed the silken track laid down by the leader in the procession, and returned over it to their nest after feeding, he induced a short train of them to venture upon the rim of a round bowl, and when all were upon the rim cut their backward track. Not till many hours of steady marching had passed did the leader by accident leave the endless rim of mounting humiliation. Which was it, the obstinacy of pride or of instinct, that led them so fruitlessly to exhaust themselves? Had it been men rather than caterpillars we should conclude for pride, but that is only because we have a terror of distrusting instinct. The advantage of imagination—and I mean the artist's imagination—is that it is quite oblivious to such fears, quite superior to such temptations, and will conclude for images of both in so far as either is capable of being imagined—that is, dramatized—for all they are worth in the vast immediate field of the actual.

What Dostoevsky thought as a man is of only preliminary importance, but what he enacted as an artist is of great importance. What he thought was only the conventional machinery by which he put his imagination to work in a given direction. What he thought initiates movement and establishes connections on a social level. Both the thought and the plot will commonly operate as heresies; they will exaggerate the force of insight and intrigue in order to put the mass of imagination—what actually happens to the characters in the novel in motion. Thus the opposition of pride and instinct will seem to us a dramatic dodge, a device by which we get at, say, the relations between the instinctive man Myshkin and the proud man Rogozhin, or between Myshkin and the two women Nastasya and Aglaia. We still value the insight precisely as we value the device, by how much it frames those relationships, and in the end by the degree in which the imaginative experience of those relationships replace the insights. Because of the profound inadequacy of the imagination before the actual—it is only a version of the actual—the replacement will never be complete, which is why the machinery must be used in the first place in any art more complicated than the lyric cry, but if successful it will move in the direction of completeness.

Very much the same rule applies to Dostoevsky's substitute for the classic devices of tragic catharsis which he could not use since they involve the notion of a stable and completely human society. I mean his emphasis on humiliation as the necessary preface and absolute condition of humility,

an emphasis which involves the conviction of a society with a drive towards collapse whether into the arms of God or the embrace of the devil, a society held together only by violence, with an operative discipline—to use Dostoevsky's own words—of laceration, insult, and injury, alleviated only by the individual humanitarian gesture. Whether looked at spiritually or politically, as an idea of society I cannot think of anything more repulsive; it is fascist society *in extremis*. To me such humilitation is not the prelude to humility, it either precludes it, or extinguishes it, or reduces it so far in the human scale that it is the desperate virtue of idiots or of the damned. We have seen recently M. Laval commending such humiliation to the people of France as humility before the facts; and we can say that Hitler has no doubt provided many people with the temptation to be true to the Dostoevsky type of character. It is for that reason, if for no other, that however repulsive we may find Dostoevsky's "humiliation-humility" sequence as an ethical idea, we must yet concede that it is an excellent focus for dramatizing at the highest possible tension a common and profound aspect of the human scene. If you believe that great sin must come before great salvation, that great extinction must precede great creation, then you will be exemplary as a dramatist if you insist on humiliation as the means of humility.

But you will most likely come on such heresy, as Dostoevsky did, by accident, and like him you will overcome your heresy to the degree that your power of imagination is more faithful than your power of thought to the actuality of life. It is imagination, not intellect, that is the charity of the understanding. That is one point at which we can use Dostoevsky's language. It is the intellect that sins and the imagination, by creating the sin, by making it actual, that redeems. Pushing the notion one degree further, we can say that so far as the arts are concerned the movements of intellect are accidental and intermittent and in their attempts to solve our problems cause most of our conflicts, whereas the imagination, so to speak, is the will of things and continuous, so that it is able to absorb the problems of the intellect by showing their counterparts in action. With the intellect we agree or disagree; the imagination either rouses our dissent in part or exacts our complete assent; in other words, the intellect of the man often sets the imagination of the artist to work at a job very much like purgation.

So it was with Dostoevsky and *The Idiot*. He made eight plans for the novel before he came on the idea that finally put him to work. These plans survive in the Dostoevsky Archives at Moscow and are described in Ernest Simmons' admirable study of Dostoevsky. It is upon his study that I here depend. At its inception the story was to have been of a family drama based upon a court trial. The three principal characters were to have been the Idiot, Mignon, and the Heroine, all of whom were violent characters given to extreme and passionate actions. The two women bear some resemblance to Nastasya and Aglaia in the finished book, but the original Idiot has nothing in common with Myshkin but the experience of epilepsy. He is

rather a Byronic hero, self-willed and criminal, sensual and extravagant, egoistic and proud: a pure type along the lines of Svidrigailov and Stavrogin. He is called Idiot principally because he is strange. On this basis Dostoevsky invented various combinations of characters and various romantic intrigues which would bring them into relation. "Situations involving murder, suicide, rape, incest, and diabolical hatred," says Mr. Simmons, "give a vivid impression of the confused drama of violent passions that agitated his brain as he sought for the artistic constants that would bring order into the chaos that he had created." What he principally lacked was a governing idea, something both general enough to make a large novel and specific enough to give the largeness focus. His first ideas were all too general: a struggle of love with hate; or, endless pride and endless hate; or again, endless idealism with endless sensualism. And so on. The one constant he had was the image of the character who finally became Nastasya, and the one near-constant was the theme of the radical generation, the young reformers, nihilists, socialists whom he feared and distrusted, and this theme was more a preoccupation and a hindrance than an active obsessive theme, and so remains in his finished novel. In the third plan there is a single phrase about the Idiot which belongs to the finished character: "He ends with a heavenly deed." The in the fourth plan a new character begins to emerge, a meek, simple, and charming person, but nothing is done with him and he disappears. In the fifth plan the Idiot is still possible to identify with Rogozhin, but there is a description of a character named Ganya who has a Christian nature and in whom feeling predominates and whom he wants to be the most powerful figure in the novel. In the sixth plan this character becomes identified with the Idiot of the earlier plans. He differs from Myshkin, however, in being a Double, like Raskolnikov or Ivan or Dimitri Karamazov: he is both submissive *and* brutal; he has "The dualism of a profound nature." Dostoevsky has now, as Mr. Simmons observes, merely "to push the development one step further to arrive at the image of Myshkin—The Meek opposite of the Self-Willed type." In the seventh plan he is made a Prince and associated with children: Myshkin is in sight. In the eighth plan the whole work is brought into relation to this new conception of the Idiot as the simple-minded Christian. "Dostoevsky plunges into the details . . . as though he were feeling the greatest satisfaction in ridding his imagination of the former proud, vengeful, and passionate Idiot." The beginning of th first draft was unsatisfactory and he "threw it all to the devil." Beginning once more he wrote the whole novel, with many interruptions, in the space of about a year, which as it runs about a quarter of a million words was fast work.

Despite the trouble he had in getting under way, in arriving at a means of composition, at a governing idea to transform into imagination, the idea of the Idiot Myshkin, once it came, set him free to work out what he claimed was an old ideal—as different from a more operative idea—for a great theme. The following passages are extracted from a letter which he wrote to his niece Sofya Ivanova, after the first part of the novel had been

finished. They will serve as text both for Dostoevsky's intended relations to the rest of the novel and for what he was actually, as a novelist, compelled to do with his moterial. After describing how difficult a job it is for a novelist to tackle the ideal good man, he goes on: "There is only one positively good man in the world—Christ, . . . I recall that of the good figures in Christian literature, the most perfect is Don Quixote. But he is good only because at the same time he is ridiculous. Dickens' Pickwick (an infinitely weaker conception than Don Quixote, but nevertheless immense) is also ridiculous and succeeds by virtue of this fact. One feels compassion for the ridiculous man who does not know his own worth as a good man, and consequently sympathy is invoked in the reader. This awakening of compassion is the secret of humour. Jean Valjean is also a powerful attempt, but he arouses sympathy by his horrible misfortune and society's injustice to him. In my novel there is nothing of this sort, postively nothing, and hence I am terribly afraid that I shall be entirely unsuccessful."

It should be emphasized that this was written after the first part, only, had been finished. The author is right so far. Myshkin is introduced with a description that makes him look like the typical Christ in the art of the Eastern Church: as "above the average height, with very fair thick hair, with sunken cheeks and a thin, pointed, almost white beard. His eyes were large, blue, and dreamy; there was something gentle, though heavy-looking in their expression." Mr. Simmons, after quoting this passage, adds that "in the manuscript notes his name is frequently coupled with that of Christ, and in one place he is called 'Prince Christ.'" For the rest, all through the first book, Myshkin is very kindly dealt with, laughed at a little only because he is strange, called an idiot only now and then to get the reader used to it, but generally arousing a mixture of admiration and compassion and respect. His unusual powers of direct instinctive perception are recognized at the Epanchins', at the Ivolgins', and at Nastasya's party. His opinions are asked, his judgment sought, and he is even required to decide Nastasya's marriage for her. As for himself he sees into the centres of people without managing to understand much of their outsides. He becomes attracted deeply, but in a mysteriously limited way, to the two proud and beautiful young women, Nastasya and Aglaia. By a combination of his judgment and his character and his feeling of attraction—by his deep but limited seeing—he precipitates the lives of most of the people with whom he comes in contact into new and intolerable forms—forms for which perhaps the goodness in them was ready but for which their living complexes of good and evil were not ready at all. The speed of this part of the novel is great; it is tight-woven and wide of scope, both with regard to the theme of Myshkin and with regard to the affairs of the Epanchins, the Ivolgins, and Totsky. It reaches a preliminary climax or crisis when with the fire of the roubles Nastasya goes off with Rogozhin, leaving Ganya in a swoon, the company shocked, and Myshkin deeply dismayed, but not at all troubled by what he has so evidently done. It is almost as if Dostoevsky had composed a dramatic fable of the alternative obedience and rebellion of these

people to the sudden felt presence of their own conscience, with Myshkin the simple, the innocent, acting the part of conscience.

The second part, after the first five chapters which proceed in a direct line and to which we shall return as the most powerfully composed single segment of the book, begins to show confusion of novelistic purpose, a mixture of themes, unexplained and unprepared for, incredible actions, and a more than occasional prolixity and positive redundancy of treatment, all of which last till at the very end Dostoevsky once again seized hold of his Idiot-Christ theme with complete imaginative power. It would seem as if Dostoevsky had partly relied on discarded bits of his earlier plans, partly let his pen run where it would in the hope of something turning up, and partly perhaps surrendered himself before the importunate assault of his mere ideas. The affair of the blackmailing nihilists, for example, is superfluous to the book, is dealt with at too much length as a side issue, runs off into Dostoevsky's emotional-intellectual dialectic against atheism and socialism, springs an incredible surprise (in Ganya's knowledge and proof of the falsity of the claim), and is saved, if it is saved, only by the outbursting character of Mrs. Epanchin or perhaps a little by the symbolic character of "Pavlishtchev's son" Burdowsky. There is something intriguing about a man who claims to be a bastard only to be proved legitimate; and it is surprising that Dostoevsky does not again return to the theme of the false bastard in connection with the main theme of Myshkin.

As a result of this confused and even bewildering treatment, the sound and clear things tend to lose some of their native force. I think particularly of Aglaia reading Pushkin's poem "The Poor Knight" with the initials transposed to make those of Nastasya—which is the last place in the book where Myshkin is seen as arousing laughter. Or again, there is the affair of Ippolit's attempted suicide which instead of being given the freed independent treatment it deserved, was by a false economy fastened onto the tail of the blackmailing scenes. You have to think back, to feel back, later to see what the scene ought to have meant at the time of its delivery.

The explanation of these confusions is predominately to be found, I think, in the intrusion of Dostoevsky's *ideas* upon his story. The middle areas of the book lose sight of the image of the Idiot in a maze of undramatized notions about the Russian soul, the east, the west, atheism, socialism drunkenness, and so on, plus casual, almost spontaneous efforts to introduce complications of plot and character which might relieve the main theme from going where it is now clear that it must go—towards the collapse focussed in the figure of Myshkin, of the ideal of positive good. There could be no clearer example than this of a great sensibility violated by an idea no sharper case of a theme being surrendered by the author to a mere thesis, and then wrenched back by violence to safety.

Whether Dostoevsky—whether any novelist—could have done otherwise with a theme so intractable because initially so alien, is doubtful. We can defend him (or label his intentions, which is a form of defense) in two ways. It might have occurred to him that a major part of the material of

character and event and intrigue in the central portion of his book had of necessity to be fortuitous. It is possible to hold that many of the items handled could as well have been others, and are themselves, and justified as themselves, all the more for their air of expressing mere casual possibilities. It is because they are immediate possibilities, perhaps, that they do their work; their fortuitousness is what makes them fatal—as, for example, General Ivolgin's probable theft of money from Lebedyev. They are the right objects for the Idiot Myshkin to affect precisely because they are unpredictable and superfluous. Myshkin is one of those who must have every sort of grist, the unexpected even more than the expected.

Again, there is a kind of rightness to the disordered apparitions of undigested material which becomes apparent if we think of the book as a fable, a sermon, a parable of the good man in an evil world. The good man will by his presence call forth exclamations and cries of both good and evil, as in all of us our conscience, when we think of it, creates qualms of ill deeds not otherwise remembered. We may say that Dostoevsky did not so much sympathize with disorder; he felt the roots of it, in himself and others, both clutching and pushing. Thus his primitive Christianity, his ideal of submissiveness, was always on the point of disclosing itself as a matrix of disorder. The man of instinct, of feeling, is always nearest to the underlying dark disorder of things, just as the man of pride, of intellect, always is found, at his focal moments, creating disorder in the name of the order that turned him loose.

But, having once acknowledged the morass of form in the middle parts of the book, let us proceed to acknowledge some of the things that emerge from the morass, and especially those things that emerge in relation to the theme of the Idiot Christ at large in the actual world. Taking the smaller things first, one of the ablest things Dostoevsky does is to show the immediate effect that Myshkin has on the footman at the Epanchins'; he allows Myshkin to smoke, to break artificial rules, and he listens to what he has to say. Similarly with Keller, where the process takes a little longer. Keller is the hard-drinking, bellicose ruffian, with a chip on his shoulder, not to be taken in by anybody; yet as soon as he has a chance to see what Myshkin is like, he becomes a good egg, even a good friend, and offers to second him in a duel. Totsky and General Epanchin, being men of the world, make allowances for Myshkin; they understand that there must be such people. Mrs. Epanchin, a sensible, direct, warm-hearted woman, knows Myshkin is a fool and a great causer of trouble, not at all a safe man to have around, but she not only puts up with him and forgives him, she finds that she must seek him out. Lebedyev, the drunken buffoon and vainglorious sponge, deeply enjoys being seen through by Myshkin, even enjoys bringing each fresh rascality out in the open. Radomsky, more a man of intellect but good-hearted and on the right side, cannot help trying to confess himself to Myshkin, and goes out of his way and without reason to corroborate to him his father's thefts of public money and ensuing suicide. General Ivolgin, the constitutional liar and idler, similarly resorts to Myshkin with

almost perfect candor because he feels that Myshkin alone knows that he is essentially an "honest" man. Kolya, too, the precocious child, the very one who ought to have stood aloof because he saw so much, and with so little reason, makes himself a follower of Myshkin. None of these persons loses anything to Myshkin; neither do they gain anything materially. They are the "ordinary" people who make up the world, and they have the same deep but slightly uneasy and superficially indifferent regard for Myshkin that such persons have towards their own conscience; and indeed that is what Myshkin is for them, an easy, objective form of conscience, to whom they can appeal without harm.

On a somewhat different level come Ganya Ivolgin and Ippolit Terentyev. Ganya is the man of vanity and ambition, but without pride; Ippolit is the man of overweening pride and intellect, but almost without vanity. To each, in a different way, Myshkin brings doom. His mere presence destroys first the possibility of Ganya's marriage to Nastasya, and second, indirectly, he prevents the possibility of his marriage to Aglaia. Further, he is present at, and is partial cause of, Ganya's supreme humiliation over the affair of the fire of roubles. Yet Ganya becomes Myshkin's man, and where he might have played Iago with cause, shows no slightest trace of jealousy after the beginning. As to Ippolit, Myshkin crushes, though by *tour de force* and not even eloquently, his Nihilism and makes a good deal of a fool of him in public, yet it is to him, and in his house, that he brings his death. Perhaps Dostoevsky arranged this in order to furnish a contrast to Myshkin of a kind not offered either by the girls or by Rogozhin. Ippolit is the man already maimed, diseased, lacerated by life, and as a consequence has rebelled against God. Redemption is not in his line; he is the Poor Knight Don Quixote *manqué,* mutilated even; and there is nothing he can rebel against except the God who has condemned him. He is a kind of sink of personality on the point of turning into a fount. To whom can he bring his rebellion, on whom can he pour forth his fountain, except Myshkin, the lay Christ of the God whom he wishes to deny? Myshkin was responsible for the material failure of Ganya; and he is morally responsible for Ippolit's realization of the doom that is upon him. Again he acts as conscience—this time not as the friendly conscience, but as the insuppressible and insupportable conscience.

With Rogozhin that is the role he had always played, but with him it was the role of a full person and not that of a mere fabulous figure. It is in relation to Rogozhin, even more than in relation to Nastasya and Aglaia, that Myshkin comes alive, moves, has his being, and suffers. This may be because, in the history of the eight plans for the book, he is a split part or double of Rogozhin; if so, that is an accident in the creative task but it is the central fact in the created product. If we turn to chapters three, four, and five of the second part, which begin with the conversation between the two men about the nature of their respective loves for Nastasya—Rogozhin's being hate and Myshkin's pity—and end with Myshkin's saving epileptic fit just as Rogozhin is about to stab him, we shall see what Dos-

toevsky was really capable of as a poetic novelist dealing with the desperate theme of the good man in action. One way of defining the effect of these chapters would be to say that it did not matter what theme Dostoevsky was dealing with, for the theme, whatever it is, disappears into the texture of the images of insight and wrestling contest in which they are delivered. They are *made* things; the poet is operating as *maker*, and operating inviolably. The atmosphere, which is the air in which the scenes actually breathe and not backdrops laid on, was first set when, that morning, Myshkin had seen "those eyes" staring at him on the crowded platform of the railway station. He was sure enough in a half-conscious way that they must have been Rogozhin's eyes, but they seemed also like his own eyes, and he kept the memory of them boring within him all day, while he searched for Nastasya, for Kolya, and for Rogozhin himself. It is as if he has been himself hunted and cornered when finally he comes to Rogozhin's house; he is full of extraordinary and inexplicable emotion and knows the house by instinct, by its largeness, its gloominess, its frigid, inhospitable, and hidden air. At the street level there is a money-changer's shop owned by a member of the sect of Skoptsy—one of those who practice self-mutilation for religious purposes. The gloom of the house and the presence of the Skoptsy are brought in again and again through the following scenes; darkness and self-mutilation become virtually parts of the psychological image of the whole scene. They make the right background for both men, for both surely mutilate themselves spiritually in the darkness of their own souls, Rogozhin out of passion and Myshkin out of goodness. In this dark place they understand each other. "When I am with you," says Myshkin, "you believe me, but when I am away, you leave off believing me at once and begin suspecting me." To which Rogozhin responds, "I believe your voice when I am with you. I understand, of course, we can't be put on the same level, you and I." In this dark place they understand also what must happen, that Nastasya, though she loves Myshkin, will eventually marry Rogozhin in order to be murdered by him, and that she will do so because of Myshkin. This prophecy is enforced by the seven-inch horn-handled knife, a new and unused knife, which Myshkin picks up unconsciously off the table, and which Rogozhin seizes from him. To complete the symbolic significance of the scene, there is next introduced Holbein's picture of the dead Christ, of which Rogozhin has a copy hanging among portraits of bishops and landowners. It is the one picture Rogozhin likes to look at. "At that picture!" cried Myshkin. "Why that picture might make some people lose their faith." Some two hundred pages further on in the book the full meaning of the picture is made plain in Ippolit's description of it. It lacks the spiritual beauty found in most portraits of Christ, he says. "It's the face of man *only just* taken from the cross—that is to say, still bearing traces of warmth and life. . . . It is simply nature, and the corpse of a man, whoever he might be, must really look like that after such suffering." The portrait is a temptation for Rogozhin, a doubt for Myshkin, and a symbol for the reader. Although it is a judgment, focused in Rogozhin's eyes, upon

Myshkin as the idiot Christ. And for Myshkin, in his turn, after he has changed crosses with Rogozhin, been blessed by his idiot mother, been refused the embrace of brotherhood, and left the house, Rogozhin becomes in terms of "those eyes," of the knife, and of the picture, first the pursuing demon, and lastly an accuser and a judge. When Myshkin discovers him at Nastasya's house, he exclaims, "With what eyes shall I look upon that man for the rest of my life!" The self-knowledge is not, however, perfected until Myshkin's epileptic fit supervenes upon Rogozhin's attempt at murder, and it endures only for the single moment in which his soul is "flooded with *inner* light," and which is terminated by the "first sound of the fearful scream which broke of itself from its breast." In that scream, says Dostoevsky, "everything human seems obliterated and it is impossible, or very difficult, for an observer to realize and admit that it is the man himself screaming. It seems as though it were someone else screaming from within the man."

So beautifully composed, so intensely felt, are these chapters at all three levels of meaning—the intellectual, the narrative, and the imaginative—and so united on the imaginative or symbolic level, that one feels Dostoevsky has created enough mass in momentum to carry through to a fitting end even his difficult and desperate theme of the ideal man; and so far as the novel *is* completed, it is the imaginative energy of these chapters that supplies the momentum. But unfortunately Dostoevsky had conceived his drama in terms of Myshkin's further relationship with Nastasya and Aglaia, for which he was unable to provide images deep enough and grasping enough to *deliver* the combination of idea and act as drama. Nastasya is carefully and imaginatively built up off-stage so that when she appears she is actual enough, and Aglaia is observed and made to act on-stage sufficiently to make her actual as a person; both women are created full of possibilities; and the reader is ready to believe not only that anything may happen, but that the right and justifying things *will* happen inevitably, out of the momentum of the characters. Yet at the crisis they are forced, and being forced they are not so much incredible as inadequate. Both women rage too much, and rage vainly, because Dostoevsky has not provided a focus for their rage in the *created* character of Myshkin, and, at the same time, because he has provided too much focus in his *idea* of that character. The inadequacy is Myshkin's, not the women's; he has nothing within him capable of satisfying the passionate desires which dominate both Nastasya and Aglaia in their feeling for him. Whether Dostoevsky deliberately omitted all sexual being from Myshkin's nature, or whether he simply was by his own nature incapable of deep sexual experience and so could not envisage it either in Nastasya and Aglaia or in Myshkin except as an idea, it was that lack, that incompleteness as a man in Myshkin, which brought on the downfall of the women, and transformed what ought to have been the tragic triumph of the good man into his reduction to complete idiocy. You cannot transmute what does not exist; you can only rage at your disability and end in ignominy and humiliation. Thus in Dostoevsky the mighty at-

tempt to create always becomes involved in sin or ignominy and ends in humiliation and obliteration. The deprivation of his nature like the privations of his life led him to envisage emotions as released either as an ecstasy of rage or as a rage of ecstasy. The emotions do not express the people, they take them over. There is always, in the great creations of Dostoevsky, "someone else screaming from within the man." In *The Idiot* it is the rage of goodness.

# ARTHUR BLAIR:
# *Only the Dean Remembers*

And if the witty beasts indite
Their Drapier's choice, what rest is spun
By columbines in cobweb light,
What easeful act is boasted done?

For Swift, whose rotted brain like ice
Once burned the hate it would endear,
Let passions peddle their device
To blend mortality and fear.

The Dean must know what violence
Vanessa heaped upon his grave;
How Pope would cough each morning dense
Dead couplets for the past to crave;

How words anonymous were flung
Into the street till Dublin rose,
As Gulliver, and missiles hung,
Gigantic, so all beasts suppose

Their servant martyred by his fate
In reeling spleen on buried ghosts:
And by this choice each must create
The feast that maddens in its boasts.

But could the Drapier forge his voice
Before this pestilence, each word
Would filter through his futile choice
In violence long since unheard:

For only such contorted wit,
Blind beyond stupor, could contrive
How vermin nestle in the pit,
How empty acts become alive.

# ROSALIE MOORE:

# *Journeys Toward Center*

## I *The Lovers*

For these happiness lies
In their drugged dark
And flat pans of eyes.

Through the window by legerdemain
Come coffins of sun.

Afterwards, they remember as irrelevant
The dusty boards, the pear skin.

And still the love that they looked for lies
On the lion side of a furnace.
Later they go
With pennies across their eyes—
Searching, as rubbing hands over bones;
Seeking in faces the frank skull.

In a leaf-rustle sleep they speak,
And long after, are still;
They see as graves do,
They glitter like old logs.

## II *The Prophets*

The bell rain—blowing across the barrows.
The flowers hold against it their small bowls,
And the hills keep blowing.

Out on the air, at a place where the raindrops cross
In a manner of stars and streets:
in back of this,
The man with the letter A for a mouth;
He speaks.
Remember his whipping face.

Many who stand in back of wire or water,
Whose mouths are marble moving,

Whose hands—
Heavy with sea.

And the rain changes its hills;
The water is filling the flowers up like roofs.

### III *The Birds*

The birds—their trumpet wings.
There is no man but has heard them in his time,
Their shadows a fall of stones.

By house, hedge, he is thinking his one-time birds,
Dreaming their jungle of wind.
By dark he hopes to hear their heavy hinges;
And he goes to the door,
And looks at the few corn stars.

What fish-striking bird dives here,
And into what skull's eyes?

Remember, as in the mirror-turning autumn,
The marsh eyes and moss body of love.

## MARTHA BENSON:

## *An Old Man on Airmen*

They dream of death where distances are waiting
Beyond the curdled heaven's final bend,
Where print of bird upon that plush is fading,
And plumage leaves a plucked and gilded limb.

Not of the earth, they feel no earthly marrow,
Balancing where star and stone must fall,
Forgetting that the blood's embouldered parent
Bubbled first within the rock's long thaw.

What is to change must climb the ages slowly,
Gathering not the mountain view's fatigue,
But as life once its watery breathing molted
And marble valleys split with silent heave.

# ROBERT BARLOW:

## *We Kept on Reading "Tuesday"*

The collapsing garden, the varnished bamboo green
as a bug's underneath,
The chopped tassel of the banana,
Purple rotting to scarlet on one receding leaf—
Ants like thoughts working within a wound,
Burying glass mummies in capsules,
All was suddenly shadowed from west.

Over so soon! There is no time
To write Harriet, or unclutter the calendar
Of days invalid, whose folly is no longer optional.
The sun, too long on the vine, draws down,
Column pines support (like Chicen's walls)
The parrot-colored lintel of the night.
Fish-eyes heaped up in a shell,
The skeleton-jointed stars hold the world.

# JOHN FINCH:

## *The Bright Bird*

Into a place of ice and silence
Flew the bright bird out of the garden.

We, remembering the bird's color,
Whispered our memories to one another,

Huddled together over the sundial
Like children on a nervous Sunday,

Spoke of the gold wings, the white throat,
How it had sung the last note.

Time passed. It seemed absurd.
Now to forget the bright bird,

Likewise the garden, but in our growing
Never forget the bird's going.

# *Paragon of Animals*

Five feet eight, dark-eyed and wiry,
Clean-shaven, with a scar upon his chin,
Well-dressed, as a rule, but awkward
At times, and too thin:

Full of respect for the necessary,
Sympathetic to strength, no pity,
Nervous as one who has heard
The hours in a city:

Descended, of course, from Adam
(A legend he likes to believe,
Claiming he blames them neither,
But secretly Eve):

Fond of a pale golden person
With a coiled steel spring for a heart,
Wooing her with a maximum of courage
And a minimum of art:

Essentially unprepared for death,
Yet aware that a dancer's precision
Comments on more than mere space
To more than mere vision:

Recalling from time to time
The shift of the absolute seasons
Over a certain rock—
Recalled without reasons:

Key to no lock, no solution,
Stable for lamb and lion,
Foe of St. Francis and friend
Of the hunter Orion.

# MILLEN BRAND:

## *In the Tracks of the Land Agents*

Every period knew them, the fraudulent land agents,
carrion of the poked-out heart, easy in its courage,
vultures of the nice meat of trust. Down
from Hill Church here, the flow of clean German graves,
a school, a crescent — bending roughly up — of third-growth woods;
a stand of pitch pine thrown from a mile-off awkward parent —
that all-elbows, cone-pocked mother of the skies —
the big stumps rotted down,
and under the crescent woods
in this impossible hill land
an abandoned farm. Here the heart-eaters
sold to trusting, freedom-loving Germans,
tough-souled ones who got to work to live
as if they had real land here.
Here the farm was cleared, here the stone went up and windows
broke through, deep, enduring over the hopeless slopes,
fields and pastures of soil
thinning towards a predestined desolation.
The windows are empty now, the sills graying with rain and melting
snow,
bits of glass grind stars back into the earth,
blind eyes, blind sight . . .
The barn, like all these German barns, has heavy side walls
put up with love, thirty feet of a hair-line plumb,
two wall edges like bands around a sacrament,
holding the overhanging second story,
melted to ghostly fragments
as flesh from bone.
The thin perfect ladder of a hay chute lies on the earth floor,
the heavy timbers break, the stalls are cleansed back to the
humus of wind and storm.
And so time and defeat have ended a bad beginning
over the hands that put up this stone,
and the eyes that looked into this depth of valley below
and wanted to stay. To accept. To ride the heartbreak margin.

Yes, it's all gone. Broken and gone. A waste.
Was it all waste? These double walls
of the barn bared now like two straight hands
holding the beams as they drop down—

the house walls with blind half-ovals of plaster—
the standing fireplace of the fallen smoke house, the weed-grown
spring?
Or was there in these hours, years, lives
approaching the ordeal of this dying of every effort of the heart,
some tribute to the human,
to every human being who endures
until the fingers slip on the supporting stone—
and there is at last death
and new beginning?

# HELEN BURLIN:

## *Of Shuckster Women*

Along sea waves the weeds,
Long hair of the sea, sway
Lazy in the salt tides.
Fish arrow over rocks
Where sea flowers are cool stars.
On the sand floor, shells are sleeping.

Since light, the shuckster women,
Too old for love,
Without smell of sea or sun,
Anchor in beds of ooze
By steam prying engines.
I saw you, your buckets brimful, dull.

Over the heart of the sea
Sundown golden sails carry
Tomorrow's shells
Past crying gulls
That drop down white to the quarry.

Shut in till starry dark
Oh soggy women, why are your black throats singing?
Dreaming of sea and sun,
Recalling the nevermore
With rainbow voices.

# JOHN RUSSELL McCARTHY:

## *Quiet Winds*

"There was a time," Enrico said, "when I wondered
the meaning of quiet winds that blow always
upon my face whatever way I turn,
and not against me only but through me, flesh and lymph,
altering all, even the bone and the dream.

"Now I know the winds for what they are:
my planet and I create them with our speed
as we go sizzing sizzing down the sky.
I've measured the winds, too. They are as long
as it takes my planet and me, soaring dizzily
between the staring stars, to circle our sun.
The winds are as thinner than air as air is thinner
than granite newly cooled; and yet one wind,
blowing a slow-sun-circle through a man,
may change him, bone and dream, to a startled stranger;
and seventy winds are all a man may bear."

## *Effluvia*

"A man of the hills," Enrico said, "becomes
what his nose makes him. The warm sweet rot of spring
yeasting the grasses, enters his body. Pine
particles fill him, and the bold air-borne stuff
of oak and laurels. Dry dead leaves are in him,
and the terror that is smoke. Bearing in his body
the death and the rot and the birth and the blooming of life,
this man listens to god-stories like a child.

"I know even less," Enrico said, "of the man
whose body is tinctured with perpetual effluvia
of motorcar exhaust and powdered pavement,
slowly crumbling factory and church.
I only know that these are in his hunger,
these are in his anger and his gods."

# FREDERICK BOCK:

## *The Water Witch*

The witch came over the mean ground
Making an elder wand.
His yellow teeth nipped off the leaf
Falling from his hand.

He stepped in bare, he walked in patch,
He wandered muttering-mad.
The little sprig, she wound in his hand;
His face was glad.

In sun and shade and underneath
He could feel water sound.
His fists were both as brown as broth.
The men stood round.

He trod twelve paces over the grass,
His mind a flowing stream.
He could not bide where sand-dump dried
For good wells of his dream.

He walked him where his thought must drown.
He let his heart-hurt go,
And let the scornings on him down
To the underflow.

He put one bare foot off the path.
A spring grew in the stick.
His shirt was wet with spotted sweat.
The little crotch was quick.

She bent like no man made could hold her.
All the diggers sighed,
Or hunched the strap across the shoulder
Or let the buckles slide.

# EVE MERRIAM:

## *Summer Cruise, 1941*

Brain, like note for milkman, left behind.
Only the body speaks our language now,
back to the elemental all-fours life:
earth, air, sunfire, water-worship.

Like schoolboy final fling before exam,
passengers and engine squeal ecstatically.
Due to dock in two weeks from today,
will pass sunburned from customs straight to care.

But first we've two weeks' grace. And two weeks' grace with pay,
wonderful part of white-collar weltanschauung,
along with Frigidaire, neighborhood double-feature,
time-payment radio and sale-bought better shoes.

For a fortnight are floating fairy King and Queen
(having paid for private stateroom in advance);
crew will cater to our every nabob wish
and sleep below in tenement-crowded hold.

For this is the gliding set of drawing-room comedy:
gentlemen enter from "First Class Smoking Room,"
ladies knit or nod in drowsy deck-chair pose,
and steward, playing butler, stands discreetly by.

Lap through the creamy Gulf, trusting squint-lined quartermaster.
All the world's blue is inked into these waters,
plainly such color was planned for pleasure trips
(unglamorous cargo concealed under our shuffleboard game).

Tomorrow Haiti and the shiny diver boys.
For nickel tosses like moonbeam from mountainous promenade deck,
can watch their naked bodies and Golliwog heads
go down, drown briefly through the deep for us...

So they are poor. Well, that's hardly a distinction,
and we have come a far path to see the picaresque.
Bring out the hoodoo drums, the donkey-riding women,
and before we tour the town let us describe it in our postcards.

Among the teeming beggar-living blacks,
mocked by royal palms and the Coca-Cola girl,
where broken beer-cans count for boundless wealth,
we pick our white-shod camera-clicking way.

Lavish tourist-lady from the former Prince's suite
nearly frowns her thoughts aloud. "Why, it's a side-show!
Surely the creatures don't live this way all the time:
after we leave they'll bring out plumbing and Grade A milk."

All are glad to go when our white ship whistles us back,
out of the black violence of day-to-day survival,
back to the clean unlittered vast bath of blue,
and the stewards wear surgical white and bow politely.

The sensuous days sigh lushly into night,
and tropic nights bear ripe and heavy dawns,
noon hangs on till sweet sirup of sundown,
and always the boat moves on in progress of civilization.

Oh never to return! Never to see again
the boss' jowly cheek, the *yrs of this inst. recd.*,
never to diaper the baby or scour the greasy pot,
never to deposit the ineffectual fiver.

Keep us, Captain! We are yours, only yours!
Chart the course for green and perfumed islands,
the purple north star, or the white white waves beyond.
Only never the four-room flat and the subway ride to work.

Captain is a stern and deaf Ulysses.
Already our magical blue leaks out,
already green . . . grey-green . . . scum.
Already the brilliant breeze is tarnished by the city.

Ahead the landmarks: refugees' red-tape hotel,
the enormous symbolic torch, Whitman's sprawling Brooklyn,
Buck Rogers Chrysler tower. The panting tugs
cushion our Gulliver gently in. And gangway!

*Careful of that bag, it's got the liquor in it.*
*Don't forget to look us up in Cleveland.*
*If that snap of Dolly comes out mail me the negative.*
*How's the baby, Harry? I wasn't seasick a day.*

The native sisal baskets, Christmas-stocking full
of foolish withering beads and warped maraccas
proclaim us TOURIST timeless, true, eternal,
to the weary gate-waiting uniform.

Bags are inspected swiftly. The green-light go-ahead stamp.
One final Lot's-wife look. Perhaps the Captain has relented,
even now is frantically churning the motors—?
Ship is rock-still. No loitering please. Pick up your bags and go.

Out in the red glare of street, do not try to dodge.
Running or hiding or shouting, we shall not gag or lose
the desperate twin voices that will never leave us now,
the stale breath of habit, the hot whisper of woe.

# JEREMY INGALLS:

## *Concerning Evil*

Ponderous and operative head,
Epitome of man made flaw in nature,
Nascent will, anatomy
Of single will asserted, no dire creature
Further search for, no terror
More to dread.

Devils once were men of prince-like fame,
Hierarchy of gentlemen decayed. Far bolder
The later satrapy,
Sons of Iago, called the honest soldier,
Who in his generation clever
Hides his name.

Liars' generation, whoreson wiles
Seductively beguile us, fouled in murder.
And who the hangman's tree
Will risk for this endeavor
To slay the worm, Othello's master?
Iago smiles.

# HORACE GREGORY:

## *An Examination of Wallace Stevens in a Time of War*

> And although my mind perceives the force behind the moment,
> The mind is smaller than the eye.
> —"A Fish-Scale Sunrise" from *Ideas of Order*, 1936

For the past ten years the poetry of Wallace Stevens has been the occasion for a great quantity of excellent talk in critical reviews; it is to Mr. Stevens' credit that he has forced his critics to exercise their brains in searching out the superlatives of praise; he has driven them forth into many curious fields of speculation, and then, once they were well on their way, he has leaped ahead, leading them in small and closely herded droves into the bogs of metaphysical discussion. As a tribute to Mr. Stevens' gifts and to his wit, all this has been a gratifying spectacle, and I am willing to suppose that Mr. Stevens in his quiet fashion has enjoyed the show. Since the earliest publication of his work in *Poetry*, he has successfully created an atmosphere of high (and brilliantly serious) comedy wherever his poems have appeared; today he is a master of his art, and if his later work has shown a tendency to grow more diffuse with the passage of time, its sensibility remains untarnished, its wit continues to refresh the ear and eye, and in certain respects which I will speak of later, its present offering is the most important contribution that Mr. Stevens has made to American literature since the first publication of *Harmonium* in 1923.

Meanwhile a general question concerning the nature of Mr. Stevens' poetry is in need of being answered; it is a question that has its bearing upon the work of a half-dozen twentieth-century poets, including E. E. Cummings, T. S. Eliot, and Marianne Moore. The question is: Is Mr. Stevens a philosopher? Can we hook ladders to his Prester John's balloon with the hope of landing safely on a terrain peopled by Zeno, Plotinus, Socrates, George Santayana, William James, John Dewey, and Professor Whitehead? I think not, and more than that, I am convinced, allowing for a difference of some two thousand years, that Mr. Stevens is one of those who were kept in mind when poets were excluded from the ideal Republic. I would go further and insist that Mr. Stevens is not an intellectual, and that the value of his poetry cannot be measured in intellectual terms—in that sense, the poetry of both Thomas Hardy and Edwin Arlington Robinson is more profound than his; theirs has greater richness if not less austerity, and a greater depth of emotion as well as a more enduring tensile strength. In saying this, I do not mean that Mr. Stevens' poetry lacks intelligence or is without evidence of a finely tempered and inquiring mind, but the point I wish to make is that a distinction must be drawn

between a so-called "intellectual poetry" and the poetry that employs to the utmost the resources of poetic intelligence and wit. The distinction has particular relevance in reading Mr. Stevens' *Parts of a World* because a number of his new poems make use of terms that have their origin in philosophic discourse; one might almost say that Mr. Stevens ruminates at large on the lack of order in a world outside his vision; he thinks about it and speculates upon it, but his true wisdom, his rightness, his precision are always related to objects that are close at hand. In *Ideas of Order*—"Sad Strains of a Gay Waltz"—he identified the future harmonies of the world with skepticism:

> Too many waltzes—The epic of disbelief
> Blares oftener and soon, will soon be constant.
> Some harmonious skeptic soon in a skeptical music
>
> Will unite these figures of men and their shapes
> Will glisten again with motion, the music
> Will be motion and full of shadows.

And in the sixth stanza of his "Examination of the Hero in a Time of War" from *Parts of a World,* the skeptical attitude resumes its voice:

> Unless we believe in the hero, what is there
> To believe? Incisive what, the fellow
> Of what good. Devise. Make him of mud,
> For every day.

Now, I am not at all certain that Mr. Stevens' skepticisms should be advanced as his prime excuse for being; we accept them only insofar as they exist within the poem for the poem's sake—we may recognize and grant the intelligence behind the questions and avowals, we may admire the wit or the sensibility that endows them with poetic meaning, we may even add them to our own store of critical observations on the world around us—but as philosophy (and here I use the word "philosophy" in its intellectual sense, the sense which implies the creation or the furtherance of a philosophic system) that is another matter.

Mr. Stevens is not, of course, the first poet to use the language of philosophic monologue for the expression of his sensibility; to take one example out of many, Pope's grand patchwork of theology, aphorisms and ideas, his *Essay on Man,* was a response to the same purpose that enters the longer pieces in Mr. Stevens' *Parts of a World,* and no one, I think, would make the error of comparing Pope's *Essay,* lively as it is, with *The Divine Comedy* or *Paradise Lost;* for the same reason, one would not trouble to waste time comparing and contrasting the virtues of Mr. Stevens' "Extracts from Addresses to the Academy of Fine Ideas" with Hardy's portentous ruin of an epic drama, *The Dynasts.* It is all too true that in reading Wallace Stevens' poetry "The mind is smaller than the eye."

I hope that these remarks do not seem to retard an enjoyment of Mr. Stevens' poetry, for I have been speaking of it as it is not, in the hope of making a much-needed distinction clear. The fact that Mr. Stevens thinks should not occasion our surprise, but a thinking poet does not necessarily become transformed into a philosopher; some few of his poems

nay embrace theological or philosophic terms—and he may speak of angels or devils, or rabbis, or "the flat historic scale"—yet I believe that his ability to do so in a poem is of quite another order from occupying Bishop Manning's pulpit or writing a supplementary volume to Professor Whitehead's *Process and Reality*. I, for one, am happy to read Mr. Stevens as a poet of sensibility, and there is no one today writing poetry in English who can rival his high appreciation of the comedy which exists in a civilized milieu. Naturally, one would not care to be shipwrecked on a desert island with one of Mr. Stevens' volumes of poetry; its consolations would then soon become nostalgic, and nostalgia, I submit, would be a weary and futile mood if it accompanied the hunting of clams upon a sandy beach.

Mr. Stevens' comic genius has ideas as well as images for its counters, and these are set as so many pawns upon a board; Mr. Stevens, as he sets his pieces on their red squares and black, is always at his best when an entire poem may be read as an analogy. (It should be said that Marianne Moore's poetry follows the same rule and that the parts of Mr. Stevens' world touch on their peripheries the poetry of Miss Moore, John Crowe Ransom, Conrad Aiken, William Carlos Williams, E. E. Cummings, and John Brooks Wheelwright. This is not to say that his poetry is like theirs, nor should one confuse the identities of seven poets, but it is true that a reading of one of the seven would open a door, however small or well-concealed, to a reading of the others.) The first poem of Mr. Stevens' new book, which bears the title of "Parochial Theme," should be read, I take it, as an analogy to seven-eighths of the cocktail bar conversation uttered and overheard during the 1930's. Mr. Stevens warns his readers that the theme is parochial, and reserves for his conclusion a word or two of salutary advice:

> Salvation there:
> There is no such thing as life; or if there is
> It is faster than the weather, faster than
> Any character. It is more than any scene:
>
> Of the guillotine or of any glamorous hanging.
> Piece the world together, boys, but not with your hands.

The same art of making the entire poem stand for an observation of the world (and Mr. Stevens is always happiest when he has brought his camera into clear foci of objects seen within the poem, whether they are pink carnations or acrobats, or pears or fish, or grapes or rubies) is demonstrated in some four or five short pieces in the new volume, and in these, indeed, "the part is the equal of the whole," and the poems themselves are without question among the finest that Mr. Stevens has written in the past fifteen years. It is only as one reads the longer pieces that the atmosphere becomes thin, the argument diffuse and tenuous. I wish I could say that his "Examination of the Hero in a Time of War" is as closely woven as his "Le Monocle de Mon Oncle," but I cannot; the poem has excellent stanzas, and the last two are in his most fortunate vein, and as he writes of "true autumn" and asks "But was the summer false?" I begin

to wonder if he has read W. B. Yeats' query concerning the existence of last season's vegetables in an introduction written for "Three Revolutionary Songs." Yet the poem, as poem, seems loosely overwritten, and the same charge may be brought against "Life on a Battleship"; it may seem an impertinence to offer Mr. Stevens the loan of a blue pencil, but the temptation to do so cannot be denied, and one would welcome fewer of his non-verbal expletives, his "Hurroos" and "da da doos" which lead on the road downward from high comedy into whimsy.

The danger which has beset Mr. Stevens' longer pieces, a danger that has been apparent ever since the publication of *The Man with the Blue Guitar* in 1937, has been the *reductio ad* whimsy of his totally serious and critical consideration of the relationship between two aspects of reality: the poet's imagination and the external world—the relationship exists, and no one would deny Mr. Stevens' pertinency in asking a few questions regarding his own or another man's position in respect to it. The difficulty arises in stating an intellectual problem in terms of fancy; in doing so, the Coleridgian distinctions between fancy and imagination become blurred beyond recognition and depart, and the various aesthetic values in the poem before our eyes become as incongruous in their relationship as the pairing of A. A. Milne's Winnie the Pooh with King Lear's Fool. A *tour de force* of this sort may still be possible, and in poetry the unpredictable always exists to shock or to terrify members of an elder generation, but so far, Mr. Stevens has walked with the constant danger of whimsy at his side, and he has progressed, at the cost of becoming diffuse, mildly argumentative, and, I suspect, unguardedly repetitious.

Some time ago, and the occasion happened to be the publication of the second and enlarged edition of *Harmonium*, I remarked that the poetry of Wallace Stevens had its analogy, and perhaps a predecessor, in the art of that American who succeeded so admirably in living away from home, James M'Neill Whistler, and who was—with the exception of Henry James and T. S. Eliot—the most fortunate of American expatriates. Today the analogy seems stronger than ever before, for Mr. Stevens in his new book is as fine a poet as Whistler was a painter; the same notes of elegance, charm, sensibility—and impressionism—are as lightly struck and as well controlled in Mr. Stevens' shorter poems as on the canvases of the man who wrote *The Gentle Art of Making Enemies*. Possibly Mr. Stevens' readings in French poetry of the mid- and latter half of the nineteenth century have contributed to the *fin de siecle* shading of his metrical nuances, and one can see how aptly many of his images fall within the period that embraced Laforgue as well as Mallarmé; but, if so, I believe the mere literary influence to be a matter of secondary importance. Mr. Stevens' alliance with that moment is one of temperament, not a desire to emulate the teachings of a master, and for us it is of greater profit to recognize in him the singular qualities he indubitably possesses—and the existence of the singular man is, of course, his primary concern. The singular Whistler and the singular Wallace Stevens—though Mr. Stevens spends

his periods of exile in Key West instead of London—should be our concern n reading *Parts of a World.*

Among the memorable poems that the present book contains, I list in addition to those I have mentioned, "The Glass of Water" and "The Woman That Had More Babies Than That," and I cannot resist the complete quotation of his "Contrary Theses (I)" which is, I believe, one of his best poems, illuminating, as its lines make their progress down the page, the present "consciousness," as Mr. Stevens himself would say, "of the violent reality of war":

Now grapes are plush upon the vines.
A soldier walks before my door.

The hives are heavy with the combs.
Before, before, before my door.

And seraphs cluster on the domes,
And saints are brilliant in fresh cloaks.

Before, before, before my door.
The shadows lessen on the walls.

The bareness of the house returns.
And acid sunlight fills the halls.

Before, before. Blood smears the oaks.
A soldier stalks before my door.

# AMONG RECENT BOOKS:

## HERBERT J. MULLER:

IGNAZIO SILONE: *The Seed Beneath the Snow.* Harpers.

In his latest story of peasant Italy, Silone continues to work the rich vein of *Fontamara* and *Bread and Wine.* He satirizes the bombast and the corruptness of the Fascist regime; he pictures his simple peasants with the same tender, shrewd, humorous understanding; he writes in the same rare spirit, of a thoroughly civilized man who is also a genuine folk writer. But his democratic faith now has a different basis. "We find among peasants and workers," declares his hero, Pietro Spina, "the last remains of pride, dignity, and common sense, the last reserves that our race may hope to draw on." Pietro, who was also the hero of *Bread and Wine,* has acquired a deep distrust of intellectuals and men of culture. In particular, he is no longer working for the Party. He has turned against their revolutionary fanaticism, their arrogance, their lust for power, their contempt of "bourgeois" decencies—the inhumanity of Comrades who were suspicious even of simple friendship. He has turned instead to primitive Christianity, a brotherhood of man outside the Church and the State. The "seed beneath the snow," the only force that can uproot our sham civilization, is the virtue of the humble poor and the simple life. Pietro is Tolstoyan even to the point of refusing to kill mice.

Silone's spirit is so genuinely humane and high-minded that I regret having to add that this work is inferior to its predecessors, and on the whole, indeed, rather tiresome. For one thing, it is a "novel" only for lack of a better name, or a better excuse for Silone to have out his talk. The hero, who is a shadowy figure anyway, is provided with no compelling action; the many characters and scenes, often vivid in themselves, have no cumulative dramatic interest; and the whole seems even less than the sum of its parts because when Silone does finally get around to the business of plot, it is only to cram a deal of theatrical incident into the last few pages and contrive an absurdly arbitrary ending. Above all, however, his story

is swamped in talk. The chief business is provided by some sixty characters in search of an audience; the petty Fascists are forever making speeches, which soon become as tedious as Silone says they are, but the hero and his friends are just about as long-winded. When Pietro has no audience he talks aloud to himself, or to a donkey. Only the donkey does not answer, and I am afraid that some readers may remember it more fondly than they will the hero.

*The Seed Beneath the Snow* is significant, then, chiefly for Silone's new gospel. As most reviewers have remarked, it is no doubt a portent. We can expect to hear more and more voices crying in the wilderness, as men sicken of our whole civilization. We can also do with much more of this kind of Christian spirit; intellectuals as well as rulers have inclined to undervalue simple goodness. At least we should hope that the mystics and prophets to come will be as tolerant and as wise as Silone; his natural piety does not blind him to the limitations of his peasants or lead him to embrace the romantic concept of the "natural man." Nevertheless, I should insist that Silone's way is not enough. Fascism as he represents it here seems chiefly ridiculous, an affair of absurdly petty knaves and fools; there are only casual references to its brutality, and to its power. Hence Pietro can complain mildly that he's tired of running away from the authorities, that it's about time they began running away from him. Meanwhile they don't; and if a million Pietros could provide a tremendously impressive spiritual example, the authorities are still likely to be far more impressed by the desperate example of the Russian peasant-soldiers. Neither can good will alone ensure peace on earth afterwards; the effort to build a better society must also be a desperate labor of intelligence. Altogether, it is unnecessary, it is in fact impossible, for us to make a clean sweep of the peculiar interests and values of our civilization. We need not worry, to be sure, about having too many simple saints on our hands; but we will need light as well as sweetness, we will have to keep and use our heads.

## MARJORIE BRACE:

### DAVID DAICHES: *Virginia Woolf.* New Directions.

Commentary on Virginia Woolf's later work has been at once regretful and chiding. There is an elegiac note, as if over a kind of sensibility no longer possible, but also disapproval of a "personal" art, unable to cope with a contemporary material demanding, it is implied, the novel of naturalism, of public speech.

As a critic, it was one of Virginia Woolf's major theses that naturalism is an adaptation to commonly-held public values, that during social transition there is a loss not only of values but of the sense of reality, which it is the artist's function to re-create by personal vision. Her forms were a response to an intellectual necessity to redefine perceptions of reality. The experimental novelist rejected naturalism because, as she contended flatly: "On or about December 1910 human character changed." The serious creative artist today, observing the sociological naturalism of the 1930's (willed into being by intense need for universal values rather than their emergence) dissolve into documentation, finds his uneasy gaze returning to the weaknesses, the dissatisfactions, and nevertheless the challenge, of those "personal visions" which seem to be daring us, in our crescendo of chaos, to do better.

For were writers like Virginia Woolf really ignoring social problems? Did they, to take one instance, believe in the isolated individual? This novelist whose phrase for life was "a luminous halo," whose "personal point of view," to quote Mr. Daiches, saw life as "rarified consciousness," as the "dissolution of experience into tenuous insights"—were not her books all resolved in a definition of reality as known only in the surrender of the personal? The pattern of *Mrs. Dalloway* makes experience into a "unified flux in which disparate individuals make contact . . . form a single indeterminate whole." The significance of *To the Lighthouse* is that "to reach the lighthouse is to make contact with truth outside oneself, to surrender the uniqueness of one's ego." The problem was how, living in an age without belief, one could be free from what she called "the cramp and confinement of personality." *Between the Acts* confessed a huge social failure: "the unity which the pageant imposed is shattered and each turns to his own role."

The quotations are from Mr. Daiches, who has a sensitive understanding of the "darkening winter afternoon" of Virginia Woolf's mood, and many insights such as that "intel-

ligence here seems to create its own sensibility." But it is writing without theory or passion; it encapsules tones, atmospheres, without attempting those fresh orientations which distinguish criticism from "appreciations." Daiches notes the similarity of Virginia Woolf's attitudes to those of Joyce and Proust, but he is uninterested in correlating their common preoccupation with time and change, in which ideas about history, in *Orlando*, or time, in *The Years*, led Virginia Woolf to substitute for character an almost marmoreal calm of many objects, and Proust to give birth to a teeming society moving toward strange symbolic marriages and cousinships. Daiches says simply that Virginia Woolf was interested in metaphysics, not character; and yet, was "personal." Actually, she failed by reason of the *impersonality* of alienation to which the personal was a statement of conflict, like a Greek chorus. Over this she laid the assuaging objective "peace" which sighs and echoes through her work: "the land had an extraordinary look of calm, of sunny peace," . . . "the sky wore an air of extraordinary simplicity and peace." It was a peace eliminating persons, giving an effect of rigid struggle, like a frozen waterfall. If Proust, yielding utterly to personal turmoil, created the most final and perfected artistic peace of our time, this, for Daiches, is one of those considerations "which do not in themselves help us to an understanding of essential aims and methods."

His book, in short, is not one which makes a writer's work newly alive for us, but it analyzes intelligently what he calls the "devices" through which one can follow the vicissitudes and wonderful triumphs of Virginia Woolf's style. Daiches is altogether very deeply absorbed in problems of technique, which perhaps is not to be wondered at, since amid his plethora of such phrases as "it remains to mention," "final touch of artistry," and "keenly appreciative," the quotations from Virginia Woolf shine like a great glittering mesh flung over the pages.

## HARRY ROSKOLENKO:

HENRY MILLER: *The Wisdom of the Heart.* New Directions.

HENRY MILLER: *The Colossus of Maroussi.* The Colt Press.

D. H. Lawrence, discovering Christ and Dostoievski, fashioned himself after their works—according to Henry Miller. Miller himself, discovering Lawrence's by-products of the vast human pantheon of disgust and the unconscious, has refitted the barque Lorenzo and gone off on a drunken-boat voyage through the phenomenal sea-alleys of his heart, through the charted seas of modern psychology, past reefs of surrealist panoramas. His is the world of shock, of poor wretches, of intelligent bores, and the great *I*. His fury and fancy, his Nietzschean syllogisms, are marvelously pure in the sea-mirror that reflects this cosmic *I*.

You do not review Miller; you just let go the anchor and go on a jag. His poetic impulses approximate a sort of double-talk on the critic's plane of art and symbolic action. The latitudes of his art, his curiosity and rhetoric, serve only to outline the intensity of his *anti* attitudes, his intellectual deferment of the world as it is; his sensual delight that a man can pass his water without too much moralistic fuss.

Both books are meridians between the mornings of Joyce, the nights of Céline, and the afternoons of Miller, who is sitting it out. The subject matter is Miller against the world and a few friends; the personal essay on our quaint quackeries and dead dogs; subtle, artificial, wonderful, engaging, bitter, brutal, joyous, drunken, moral, amoral — exciting reading at all times. As the last spiritual anarchist to visit Greece before the blood flood inundated it, Miller found Greece fixed forever on this joyless planet, a Colossus among the pygmies; for the Greeks, even in their begging, have a majesty all their own and are as permanent as their antiquities. *The Colossus of Maroussi's* leading man, Katsimbalis, Miller's alter ego, is a sort of heroic Mischa Auer, full of Millerian humanity, Lawrencean iconoclasms, Greek to the last coffee-pot and statue. Katsimbalis tells tall tales, overhauls all the cities of the world (now being done for us, but in the wrong way); he flies like a plane, shouts like a duck, exhumes the planet with his phantasms — and can even tell the difference between the words *mad* and *crazy*, preferring the surrealist anatomy of the former word to the madhouse indignity of the latter.

Miller's literary history has woven for him the acid cloak of death—with experience at the sensory taps, the initial alphabet of his spirit. Since art is long and time foreshortened,

Miller's panchromatic enthusiasms for the *anti*-forces, the elemental evaporations and exasperations, commit him to splendid ecstasies of primal faith and public disavowal — with the slide rule of Lawrencean morality as the measure, wraith, and righteousness of his blood spirit.

## ROBERT DUNCAN:

### KENNETH PATCHEN: *The Dark Kingdom.* Harriss and Givens.

Righteousness and enthusiasm are embarrassing qualities in a poet in our time. We feel that some sort of reserve, some sort of decorum, is essential. Patchen lacks good taste—he is wild, so earnest that we blush for him. He talks about his God as if he really believed in all that. Some sort of explanation is necessary.

The ten commandments are not meant to be *literally* taken. An intelligent, civilized person understands this. Adultery, for instance. All that is relative. What has happened is that where you and I know all this and are sensible about it, Patchen seems to take it all as absolute. He is just a religious bigot like George Fox or Milton or Bunyan, another maladjusted poor bastard who takes himself and his God seriously and cannot accept the world as it is.

"Our age is an age of moderate virtue and of moderate vice," Eliot wrote in *The Rock.* This is the sane way to look at it. We all realize that the war now is a moderate kind of vice if any, and by moderation we will reach the good of all in the end. Quite a few young men are being moderately killed and a few cities are being moderately bombed. But Patchen wants us to believe that this is not true. By force of madness he tries to convince us that this war is not moderately comfortable, but that it is evil. That if we come to victory by way of war it will be a victory by way of evil, a victory of evil. Patchen does not see things in an "American Way," it is clear. He does not understand that when we bomb Cologne it is on the side of good and that when "they" bomb London it is on the side of evil. Patchen clearly does not remember Pearl Harbor.

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In continuing the geography of his world of religious experience, Patchen proposes *The Dark Kingdom.* This region lies above the damned universe of Albion Moonlight and it is the true home of all the children of God.

There is in the new volume more control of his medium than in *The Journal* where the writing ranged from passages of exciting brilliance and insight to passages of strained and unsuccessful effects and poorly written philosophies. In *The Dark Kingdom* Patchen continues to work with the same phantasmagoria—the baby monsters, the raving terrors, the *Weird Story* populace. The brood of the goddess Anna is more in the tradition of Lovecraft than in that of Blake. Yet one has the feeling that it is terror in the tradition of Blake that Patchen intends. The crippled, freaky, and monstrous creatures are not the Evil one feels but the Evil is on our side of the fence. The Evil is the world as it is reported in the newspapers and envisioned in the speeches of the public representatives. Reported by Patchen, this world is seen as populated already with the harbingers of something other than spring: Truth is an unsightly universe.

Patchen will not allow himself an arbitrary literary form. He has restricted himself in this new volume to short poems—at his best, as in "As We Are So Wonderfully Done with Each Other," he achieves in lines of a lyric a rare accuracy and tenderness. At his worst as in lines like "Schoolboys over whom the retching crows sing," his lines retch and rebel themselves. The dilemma is that Patchen, since *Before the Brave* when he deserted the security of literary form, has been searching for an organic form, restlessly discontent with his own psychic organism that cannot develop a form to include the themes of his times. One is painfully conscious in reading the passages on War, Murder, and the Original Sin that Patchen is woefully self-conscious and ill at soul in dealing with his material. The words are ill at soul.


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